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THE SUDDEN INSANITY OF THE SMUGGLER SHARKEY.

RECORDS

OF

THE BUBBLETON PARISH;

OR,

PAPERS FROM THE EXPERIENCE

OF AN

AMERICAN MINISTER.

REYNOLDS, ELHANAN WINCHESTER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILLINGS.

“Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them; . . . they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragons’ teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men.” — MILTON.

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T O

THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN PASTOR,

WHO MAINTAINS THE INTEGRITY OF HIS OFFICE

AMID THE ALLUREMENTS OF FRIENDSHIP AND THE THREATENINGS OF ENMITY ;

PROCLAIMING THE WILL OF GOD IN FEARLESS FAITH AND UNCOMPROMISING PURITY ;

TRUSTING IN THE POWER OF TRUTH AND THE RECOMPENSE OF VIRTUE ;

These "Records" of Ministerial Vicissitudes,

IN THE CELEBRATED PARISH OF BUBBLETON,

ARE VERY RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.



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PRELIMINARY AND CRITICAL.

AFTER some dozen of the ensuing "Records" had circulated through the columns of a periodical, it became evident that they were causing some disturbance in those places to which they had gained access—particularly in the ancient and reputable town of Scandalburgh. The editor began to be plied with letters from various dignitaries of that town, making inquiries concerning the authorship of these objectionable papers, and offering some rather free criticisms upon their merits. Whereupon the author—in considerable alarm—made haste to secure the silence of the periodical editor, and pursued his task under a thick cloud of mystery.

Only two of the Scandalburgh letters have fallen into the author's possession, and they are of such an instructive nature that he would fain put them to some good use. After mature deliberation, therefore, and with the approbation of the publisher, he has resolved to incorporate the substance of them into this introductory paper,—asking of their writers the pleasant service of ushering his book before the public, as an offset to the ravages which their strictures have committed upon his peace.

The first of these letters purports to come from "PHILEMON PENDERGRASS, ESQ." It opens like a royal missive, with an array of personal titles and dignities, together with a most perplexing confession of diffidence—after which

it becomes intelligible. I begin to transcribe at the second paragraph.

“ Without further circumlocution, I proceed to state that no small sensation has been created in our worthy village, by the publication, in your journal, of those papers concerning ‘The Bubbleton Parish.’ The first thing, I believe, that provoked the interest of our people, was their *anonymous* character. It was very annoying not to know who wrote them. There was an amazing exercise of conjecture. Our people, sir, have a very *inquiring* turn of mind. They went, in a body, to the minister’s house, supposing that he must be in the secret. But he, excellent man! being wholly devoted to grave and solid studies, had not even read the exciting papers. Indeed, so earnestly did he disavow all knowledge concerning the said papers, that one of the deacons — who prides himself on his sagacity and knowledge of human nature quite as much as a deacon should — deliberately charged him with having written them *himself*, — a charge which greatly distressed our honest pastor, both because it implied a doubt of his word, and because it supposed him capable of ‘frittering away his time,’ as he said, in such superficial employment. Well, as the minister could give them no information, the people came to me, with a confidence quite flattering. It was very humiliating to confess myself equally ignorant, for I remembered that I had sat in the State-house, and helped to support the majesty of the Commonwealth; but I did *not* know the author of the papers in question, and condescended to tell my neighbors so, frankly. I have understood, by the by, that several of them wrote to you on the subject; but as I have good

reason to believe that they did not pay their postage, it is likely you never saw their letters !

“ Thus it happens, that, up to this present day, the author of those papers remains unknown to us. Meantime, the curiosity of our people has been increasing at a frightful rate. This is especially true of the women. It is not because of any *merit* apparent in the sketches — for in my opinion they are quite destitute of claim on that ground — but because there is a *secret* connected with them. Our town of Scandalburgh is famous for demolishing *secrets*. It has an amiable facility of looking through every man’s blinds. It holds to unlimited confidence — to unrestricted observation. Now in this matter, its curiosity is thwarted, and it fumes and swells like the mill-stream I dammed up on my new farm last summer ! You will not wonder that I share this innocent curiosity, for I am but human, and — I have dwelt all my life in Scandalburgh. Would it be presuming too far on your obliging disposition, to ask you to inform me, by return of mail, *who* this writer is ? The secret shall be confined to my own breast, if such should be your desire, and I will baffle the anxiety of my friends with the hardihood of a stoic. Indeed, what right has Scandalburgh to claim all the information possessed by its Representative in the General Court ?

“ But our curiosity has reference to another particular : *Where is BUBBLETON ?* We have consulted three of the largest maps of the Commonwealth, without the least satisfaction. My son, Adoniram, who is at the head of the geography-class, thinks it must be a new city, as he has never met with it in the course of all his explorations about his well-thumbed atlas ; but the schoolmaster — a positive sort of a man — asserts, very dogmatically, that

there is no such town at all ! Now what are we to think, Mr. Editor ? I hope your anonymous historian is not imposing upon our simplicity, and exercising our interest on a mere fiction.

“ But this is not all we have to complain of. — It seems to us that the unknown writer of those ‘ Records ’ is a little *personal* in some of his descriptions. I know not a few good people, who consider themselves *hit* in some of the characters already drawn, and there’s no telling what other innocent persons may be decoyed into this gentleman’s menagerie. Whoever he may be, or however faithfully he may narrate the affairs of Bubbleton, I have a suspicion that he is not wholly ignorant of certain persons and transactions in our own excellent parish. Indeed, I fear that the fidelity of his pictures may lead that sagacious deacon of ours, to suspect the poor parson of having gossipped about the frailties of Scandalburgh, to this very writer, and so have become the real author of our confusion !

“ It seems to us, moreover, that the writer in question insinuates certain mischievous opinions, concerning the authority of preachers, their obligations to preach the naked truth, and so on. Now we are an independent people in Scandalburgh, and we are resolved never to submit to priestly dictation. Our minister must preach what we want to hear, or he can’t preach anything. We won’t be made uncomfortable in our own church. If we give a minister his living, he is bound to respect our feelings, and not rake into notice our little faults. A fine thing it would be — this keeping ministers and going to church — if one were liable to hear the bold truth about one’s self, and that to his very face ! — Why many of us would no

more enter the church-doors, with *that* understanding, than a suspected thief would go and pay his respects to the marshal.

“No ; our minister knows his place, and he keeps it. He never offends our self-respect by disagreeable suggestions, — never peels our pride by any home-thrusts of Gospel logic. He is an eminently peaceful and submissive man. He keeps clear of exciting subjects. In a word, he is just such a minister as we like ; for if he is a little long-winded and foggy in his sermons, he is sure to say nothing that can render our nap uncomfortable !

“There is no danger that he will give us any trouble, I think, unless the example of that most insolent of ministers, Mr. Oracular Blunt, should pervert him. For you should know, that of late he has taken to reading those Bubbleton sketches, with a suspicious kind of avidity ; and has even been heard to commend the character of Oracular Blunt, and to sigh, regretfully, as he praised him ! I confess, Mr. Editor, to a slight sense of uneasiness, as I consider the possible effect of such admiration. Just rein in your galloping historian, will you not, if you find his characters working mischief in our parish ?

“Were time granted me, I trust I might find much more fault still with those Records of Bubbleton. I think, for instance, that I might prove them unpardonably *frivolous*, — a charge borne out by the fact, that all the young people are reading them, and expressing an unusual interest in the hero and Miss Arlington.”

This communication was succeeded, in due time, by the following erudite epistle from the REVEREND OCTAVIUS GREEKROOT, the venerable pastor of Scandalburgh, to

whom Esquire Pendergrass refers with such exquisite delicacy :

“MR. EDITOR, — Inasmuch as that golden-fleeced and wisely-spoken sheep of my humble flock — Philemon Pendergrass, Esquire — the most worthy representative of the town of Scandalburgh in the General Court of this Commonwealth — has been moved to write you in relation to certain spiritual matters, and more especially in relation to that apocryphal account of the troubled ministry of a young disciple in Bubbleton, it seemed good to me also to address you with a brief communication, setting forth my general estimate of the papers in question — that is, the ‘Records of Bubbleton Parish,’ — and touching also, in my concise style, upon a few contingent particulars.

“It is the habit of certain of my hearers — who have been favored to indulge in too much profane reading (thereby becoming somewhat too opinionated and restive), — to complain that I allow too much of my sermon to be devoured by the exordium : but you will perceive, by the directness and point of this epistle, how incapable I am of committing such an error in the distribution of my rhetoric.

“As Esquire Pendergrass hath truly informed you, I was not readily drawn to read those curious writings concerning Bubbleton Parish ; for — happening to glance at some passages in one of the earlier numbers, that seemed to savor of levity and a satirical fancy — I thought it unbecoming the gravity of my profession to occupy myself with such reading. Besides, I was then perusing the works of that profound theologian and laborious scholar, Ananias Goldchoke, and was deep in the fifth volume of his edifying treatise on the Architecture of the Celestial

Mansions. Howbeit, having finished that treatise, and read also, with great profit, the same author's disquisition on the Properties of the Wild Honey which John ate in the wilderness, and, moreover, feeling oppressed by the weight of Dr. Goldchoke's ponderous erudition, — I permitted myself — as a recreation, only — to hear my daughter read the sketches, so far as they were yet published. Peradventure I may have been somewhat moved thereto, by the knowledge that my poor flock — who know not the delight of grave and scholastic studies — were reading the papers with an avidity that characterizes the pursuits of the frivolous, and making the most reckless conjectures respecting their authorship. Since they were so commonly talked about among the parishioners, it seemed wise that I should be able to give an intelligible opinion concerning them, and if I found them likely to prove mischievous — controvert them successfully. For I remembered having once placed myself in rather an embarrassing situation, by delivering a powerful philippic against novels, and afterward finding it impossible to adduce a single work, or a solitary passage, in confirmation of my broad assertions. Subsequently, however, I read 'Alonzo and Melissa,' and the 'Three Spaniards,' and felt myself adequately armed with authorities.

"But, doubtless, you are impatient to know what estimate I have formed of those writings.

"The unknown writer himself, will, peradventure, lay down his pen and suspend his breath, till he hears the decision of the old pastor of Scandalburgh.

"Howbeit, I must confess that opposite tendencies do so divide and perplex my judgment, that — in the present unfinished state of the memoir — I find it hard to offer an

authoritative and final opinion. I find the work, like the nature of man and metals, to be possessed of good and evil ; but which the erudite and discriminating reason may find to *predominate*, is hard to tell.

“ I will, however, instance a few evidences *against* it ; — perhaps it may tend to abate and sober the too evident vivacity of the author ; and I dare say there will be enough less discerning critics to speak in its *favor*.

“ In the first place, I observe — what our eminent Representative, Esquire Pendergrass, hath noticed — that those papers are shown to be *frivolous*, and not the work of a well-balanced understanding, by *the very fact* which, no doubt, immeasurably gratifies the short-sighted author — namely, their *popularity*. Now I can safely say that they elicit more interest in Scandalburgh, than the most learned sermons I have preached for the term of fifteen years. Indeed, it was so late as last Sunday — after I had been proving, for an hour, the indefiniteness and capacity of meaning attached to some of the Greek adjectives, preparatory to the unfolding of a magnificent biblical sermon — that I discovered three of my best hearers absorbed in tracing — not the thread of my argument (pearl-strung as it was with wise quotations), but the fortunes of the Bubbleton minister ! I must needs say that the faculty of interesting the ignorant, is what no wise man should be proud of ; and that the *favor* which those papers have secured, reflects seriously upon their soundness and the erudition of their author.

“ It is to be observed, yet further, in stating the defects of the work, that too much space is allotted to quaint conceits, that provoke an unseemly smile, and to light dialogues, such as any minister may hear in his own parish.

“If the writer be really a clergyman, I advise him to repent of the sportive passages which he has allowed to creep into his narrative ; for a minister’s trials ought never to be detailed but in the most solemn manner ; and an even tone of lugubrious lamentation renders the effect irresistible — as I know from long experience with parish committees. And as regards the dialogues — if dialogues there must be in such a memoir — it would have been better, in my judgment, to have had them turn upon some problems of metaphysics, or some intricate questions of a scientific or historic nature. What an admirable subject, for example, ethnology would have furnished for the sewing-circle to discuss ! — although candor obliges me to admit that I have not yet succeeded in introducing it into the Scandalburgh Circle.

“But, instead of these erudite themes — the noble delight of the learned — we have in this story endless debates about reforms, and the responsibility of ministers ; things, which — while they entertain the idle curiosity of superficial minds, in their rehearsal, are so irritating and disturbing, in their experience, that nobody can wonder at the sad dissensions that convulsed Bubbleton Parish.

“I am sure that, were I to imitate that impulsive and imprudent young clergyman, who has been entertaining us with his misfortunes, I should stir up a rebellion here in Scandalburgh, which all my knowledge would not enable me to quell. And I would take this opportunity to warn all youthful and inexperienced ministers, who may be reading the Records of Bubbleton, against imitating the rash independence which is therein glorified.

“It is to be hoped that the above unequivocal paragraph will calm whatever apprehensions may have been felt by

my flock, in consequence of an inadvertent allusion to me, which occurs near the close of Esquire Pendergrass' letter. That artless and catholic man was, by the by, greatly confounded by finding his entire epistle in print, when he had relied upon your discretion to suppress those parts liable to affect his popularity at home. I fear that some of the people therein alluded to, were stirred with sudden anger, at their Representative's equivocal mention of them. Even I confess to have been momentarily pained, by what had the appearance of a disrespectful statement of my position; but Esquire Pendergrass came and offered the amplest explanations, which he generously accompanied with the present of the Patent Office Reports, for the present year, —and so I have the firmest assurance of the great man's esteem!

“Do not think that I would discourage the completion of the Bubbleton Records. After all, I find them pleasant reading, after having bowed all day beneath Dr. Goldchoke's massive wisdom. And my wife reads them faithfully, — sometimes with tears — for she is a weak, good woman. Perhaps she remembers when we were both in our prime, and strong with hopes we have never realized, and purposes we have never fulfilled. Possibly she remembers when *my* views of ministerial responsibility were more rigid than now; and when — before poverty and persecution had swept my nobler energies away, I aspired to be a truer, worthier man!

“Yours, &c.,

“OCTAVIUS GREEKROOT.

RECORDS

OF

THE BUBBLETON PARISH.

I.

MY ENGAGEMENT.

I HAD been in the ministry scarcely two years, when I received the proposition to locate in Bubbleton. It happened in this way : While preaching in the little mountain village of C——, in New Hampshire, I had noticed, during two Sundays, a strange gentleman seated in front of the pulpit, who seemed to regard me with peculiar interest. He was a portly, substantial-looking individual, elegantly dressed, and exhibiting an air of refinement altogether superior to the majority of my country congregation. His physiognomy gave evidence of a man decided in his opinions, and prompt and firm in the execution of his purposes.

My imaginative people made up their minds, at once, that he must be a man of distinction,—perhaps a member of the cabinet, or an English author, rusticated *incognito*.

I had been wondering not a little who the stranger could be, when, about an hour after the close of the second day's services, I was surprised by seeing him enter my study. Apologizing for the inconvenience to which his visit might subject me, he introduced himself as Mr. Arlington, from the first parish in the thriving town of Bubbleton, and expressed, in very polite terms, the gratification he had experienced from my humble ministrations of the word of life.

"You are not permanently located in this town, I am informed."

I answered that my connection with the society in C—— was limited.

"A fortunate thing," pursued Mr. Arlington. "Your abilities make you deserving of a more commanding post. This place will never do."

I stammered something—I don't remember precisely what—in answer to this patronizing compliment, and Mr. Arlington went on :

"Now, there is a vacancy in our parish,—a field well adapted to your abilities,—and I have called to offer you the pastorate. The salary will be six hundred dollars, and, as you have no family, it will be a very handsome support."

"But," said I, with much surprise, "I am not known to your people,—they have never even seen my face, or heard my name, I presume. Is not this rather premature?"

Mr. Arlington gave me a most assuring smile, as he replied :

“Have no fears from that circumstance, my dear sir. I have both seen and heard you with entire satisfaction; I may say, I trust without arrogance, that I know the wants and wishes of our people; and you may rely on their entire acquiescence in this arrangement. It is by no means a difficult parish.”

I remained silent, trying to view the proposal wisely. Mr. Arlington added:

“Of course, the business will come before the society in a democratic manner, and you will receive an invitation officially; still, without waiting for such action, you may consider yourself engaged, so far as *we* are concerned; for I am entirely certain that the people will accept my representation of the case.”

This was a new idea of democracy, to be sure; but I was a young man, then, of a hopeful disposition, and trusted that all would be right. Mr. Arlington had a confident way of expressing himself, and the assurance he gave was very weighty in my mind.

As my reflections were rather confused, I proposed to consider the matter until the following day; but Mr. Arlington purposed leaving town in the morning coach, which started at four o'clock, and “would feel exceedingly obliged by an immediate decision.”

To promote this end, and also to induce a decision favorable to his wishes, Mr. Arlington launched into a glowing description of the natural, social, commercial, and spiritual attractions of Bubbleton. That he appealed to my ambition, and flattered my self-

esteem, I cannot conscientiously deny ; and that he carried his point, none of my readers who recollect the title of these records will be surprised to learn.

After the gentleman had taken his leave, I sat for a long time reflecting on the engagement. My thoughts were not altogether agreeable. It was not the idea of forming a new connection that affected me, — I had long anticipated a change of this nature ; but I felt that I had been precipitate, and influenced, perhaps, by motives not strictly in accordance with the requisitions of my office. I had made it too much an affair of business, and had suffered my imagination to be dazzled, and my ambition excited. As I recalled the words and manner of Mr. Arlington, I felt that he was not a man formed on the highest Christian model, nor one on whom a good minister could safely rely, through the vicissitudes of a pastoral career. The feelings which he had roused in my heart during our brief interview were such as to alarm me, when I came to analyze them, and to trace them to their source ; and I asked myself what would be the effect, on my own character, of continued intercourse with such an individual.

Other questions, which might well have been suggested, did not then arise ; but I saw enough in the prospective connection to give me serious uneasiness, and I spent the night in revolving possible contingencies.

Little more than a month later, from one of the eminences that bound the growing town, I obtained

my first view of Bubbleton. I had come to take charge of a parish of whose circumstances and wants I was totally ignorant, and only one of whose members I had ever seen.

I had resided nearly all my life in an obscure country home, and had anticipated no more conspicuous field of labor than might be presented in a quiet village parish. As the coach of which I was a passenger rolled through the busy streets of Bubbleton, the sight of the thick and hurrying population, with their nervous movements and anxious countenances, and the thought that my own life was, henceforth, in some sort, to be identified with theirs, oppressed me with a feeling of overpowering solemnity; and, with as great a sense of weakness as I ever realized, I silently implored the help of the Lord, and the guidance of his wisdom.

II.

MY PREDECESSOR.

I ALIGHTED at Mr. Arlington's door, whose guest I was expected to be for several days, preparatory to the arrangement of a permanent home.

I found this gentleman living on a scale of luxury and magnificence that I had never seen equalled in my limited observation. He was evidently a man of no inconsiderable wealth and social importance. He received me in the most cordial manner, as did his family also, which consisted of a wife, two sons and a daughter,—all of whom appeared well bred, accomplished and agreeable.

After tea—for it was evening when I arrived—Mr. Arlington sat in dressing-gown and slippers, conversing on society affairs. Nothing could be more charming than the mild, musical tones of his voice, and the bland, smiling expression of his face, as he spoke of the history, condition and prospects, of the parish. A thorough amiability distinguished every word and movement of the man. He seemed to live in a halo of beneficence.

And yet I perceived an indescribable something in the man that made me distrustful. I thought there

was that in his nature that he would not like to reveal. I thought him an accomplished tactician, but not entirely sound in his principles. At all events, I did not feel warranted in giving him my utmost confidence. Still, I was but a young man, who had seen but little of the world, and whose disposition was naturally trustful.

“Our late worthy pastor, Brother Stringent,” remarked Mr. Arlington, after we had conversed about an hour, “though an able man, failed to appreciate the feelings of his people on certain important subjects. He was rather hasty, and, as some thought, a little too dictatorial.”

I said nothing in answer to this, and he presently resumed :

“Our people generally prefer to have their minister set forth the principles of the Gospel in a forcible and attractive manner, instead of indulging in direct allusions, which are apt to irritate the feelings and provoke discord, as you know. They want the Gospel preached in a thorough and pleasing manner ; they believe in the Gospel of Christ as the only means whereby men can be saved ; and it grieves them to see a minister disregard the apostolic method, and discuss in the pulpit irritating themes, such as can only mar the peace of a congregation, and disturb the unity of Christian sentiment.”

“That was Brother Stringent’s offence, I suppose,” said I.

“Precisely so. Brother Stringent lacked patience ;

he could not wait for Gospel principles to develop themselves, but sought to hasten the appointed time of the Lord, by a somewhat injudicious APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL, as he termed it, to particular exigences. Now, as I said, our people desire, above all things, to hear *Gospel preaching*; they have faith in the Gospel that it will ultimately fill the world and extinguish all sin; and it grieved them to discover in their pastor a virtual distrust of its efficacy, and a presumptuous desire to precipitate it to an issue evidently at variance with the arrangements of Providence."

My astonishment at this extraordinary statement of the case may be imagined.

Mr. Arlington continued, with the same unruffled serenity :

"Of course, I thought it my duty to reason with our pastor, in reference to the course he was pursuing; but he was quite past conviction. I advised him not to anticipate too sudden a harvest of righteousness; reminded him that men's hearts were obdurate, and that the progress of the Gospel is gradual; exhorted him to have more confidence in the power of divine grace, and more patience with the infirmities of fellow-beings. 'Preach the everlasting Gospel, Brother Stringent,' I said, 'and let things take their course. Fret not thyself because of evil-doers. Don't get into strife with the brethren. Soft words, gentle methods, are most successful in winning souls.' But, as I said, the good man was past conviction.

He was fairly mounted on the hobby of reform. He even taunted me with being a timeserver, and said I made the Gospel an abstraction. He differed from me entirely respecting the course pursued by Christ and his apostles, and went so far as to say that no minister, now-a-days, could imitate their plainness and severity, without being dismissed from his charge. We endured this rashness, for several weeks, with Christian patience,—for we are not a difficult people, and, moreover, Brother Stringent is a man of power, and was admired throughout the city. But, finally, the matter became too serious, and we could hesitate no longer as to our duty.”

“Was he actually dismissed by the parish?” I inquired.

“It came very nearly to that, I believe,” answered Mr. Arlington, smiling more benignly than ever. “But the provocation was great. It was last July that he ventured to preach a discourse on national affairs. He undertook to show that we were all implicated in the sin of American slavery, and he painted that alleged sin and its consequences in such colors as to seriously offend the national pride of our people. It was a dreadfully humiliating discourse; and what rendered it particularly repugnant to me, was the circumstance of my having an English friend in my pew, on this very occasion. Any true American may imagine my feelings. That unfortunate sermon confirmed all the prejudices of my friend; he called it the noblest confession he ever heard from a Yan-

kee's lips ; and, after that, he found nothing in all our glorious land but cupidity and oppression."

I could not but acknowledge that the circumstance must have been extremely annoying to one anxious for his country's reputation.

"Indeed, sir, it was no less," pursued Mr. Arlington ; "and, besides, the selection of Scripture which he read on the occasion was injudicious. It was the first part of the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel ; and the idea implied was, that our noble country is another apostate Judea, on the verge of a destruction which its wickedness has provoked !"

Mr. Arlington spoke with the utmost calmness, benignly smiling all the time ; but it was evident that he had a proper sense of the heinousness of his late pastor's conduct.

I inquired whether the parish were unanimous in their disapproval of Brother Stringent's views and course.

"Not entirely," was the reply,—a little reluctantly given, I thought,—"there were two or three obscure members who were in favor of supporting the pastor ; — men of no very comprehensive views, I ought to say, perhaps, but a little too radical in their feelings to promote harmony in the parish. You will understand their characters best when I inform you that they are total-abstinence men, and that they insist on the immediate abolition of slavery ! But every cause will have its adherents, particularly in our free country," concluded Mr. Arlington, with an

air of philosophical serenity. His was admirable resignation !

“ And do these men retain their connection with the society still ? ”

“ One of them has left ; he is a rash-spoken man, and has a number of uncharitable things to say about us. He goes up to Boston to all the Garrison meetings, and is very fond of declaiming about the guilt and danger of the nation. The others thought it best to remain, and see what sort of a pastor the parish would settle next : I suppose they will govern themselves according to their impressions concerning you. One of these I would desire to retain permanently, for he is engaged in a lucrative business, and his social relations are such as tend to enhance the respectability and influence of the society. Still, I trust that the disposition of these brethren will occasion you no trouble,—indeed, it should not ; for our people will stand by you firmly and faithfully, and enable you to preach the Gospel with power. All in all, it is not a difficult parish.”

I made no reply, for I felt my courage sinking every instant.

Other topics were now introduced, in which the family joined, and the conversation became general. Later in the evening, Miss Arlington favored me with several popular songs, with accompaniments on the piano. The young lady had a splendid voice, and was thought to execute with superior taste ; but I am no judge of music. All I can affirm is, that her

genius failed to dissipate the clouds that brooded over my spirit.

It was Saturday evening, and I retired at eleven, thinking dubiously of the morrow. There were two alarms of fire during the night, and I dreamed of being arraigned before Mr. Arlington in an ecclesiastical court, for preaching contrary to the gospel of Bubbleton.

III.

MY FIRST SUNDAY IN BUBBLETON.

A CLEAR, delightful morning initiated my first Sabbath at Bubbleton. I arose, if not refreshed by my unquiet slumber, at least gladdened and encouraged by the pleasant aspect of the day. From one of the windows of my chamber, I counted ten church-spires glistening in the sun. The noise of toil and strife had ceased. Mammon, as if satiated with homage, had withdrawn into the dingy recesses of his temple. The holy day had come. The symbols of its nobler service, rising above the quiet town, shone winningly in the sky.

"We shall have a splendid congregation to-day," observed Mr. Arlington, as we sat breakfasting.

"People have every inducement for coming out that fine weather can present, to say the least," responded his wife.

"They will find that *that* is not the greatest inducement, I trust," rejoined Mr. Arlington, with a smile of patronizing significance.

I could not help thinking that this man regarded me very much as a manager might regard a promising actor, on whose supposed powers he had staked

his judgment and his money. Evidently, my claim to ministerial fitness was based on my ability to please, to delight my hearers. But, suppose my hearers were sinners, and suppose I were to remind them of the fact, now and then, according to the old apostolic usage,—what then? Would *that* please and delight them? Doubtful.

The hour of service arrived. I found the church in which I had agreed to officiate a beautiful edifice, moderately large, and pleasantly located at the junction of two fine streets. After having been introduced to about twenty brethren, who seemed to have been waiting my arrival, in the porch, I was permitted to pass up the aisle and enter the pulpit.

The church was filled. The first sight of the new pastor justified, perhaps, some little sensation; but scarcely all the observations, I think, that were being whispered through that large audience concerning him.

Amid all the bewildering multitude of faces that were directed toward the pulpit, how few indicated any consciousness of the proprieties and demands of such a place! Did the people feel that they were before God? No; God was scarcely in their thoughts. Had they come to worship? By no means; they had come to see the new preacher. Did they desire instruction, enforcements of duty, appeals to their consciences, persuasions towards excellence? Not at all; they desired amusement. Curiosity, not devotion, was their predominant trait.

Nevertheless, there was that in this vehement curiosity, which, while it humiliated the *minister*, excited and inspired the *man*. I had never preached before with such an impulse of intoxicating emotion.

In the afternoon the audience reminded me of a mass meeting. The aisles were seated. There was, evidently, considerable excitement. In a prominent pew, luxuriously furnished, sat Mr. Arlington, with his family,—an expression of proud satisfaction marking his countenance.

During the delivery of the sermon, I observed him occasionally glancing aside, as if to mark the effect of certain expressions on the minds of different individuals. The examination seemed generally satisfactory, and he would resume his attentive attitude with more complacency than ever. It was a triumph, to see his own judgment of the preacher so spontaneously ratified by the congregation.

While speaking, however, my eyes were attracted to one hearer, who did not appear to agree with the majority of the audience in their estimate of the preacher. He was a small man, with sharp, boldly-marked features, that wore, on this occasion, a scowl of emphatic disapprobation. He sat quite restlessly during the preaching, and when the discourse was ended, bolted out of the church, without waiting for anthem or benediction.

Unable to account for so marked an exhibition of dislike, I mentioned the circumstance, after service, to Mr. Arlington. He had not seen the individual,

but, upon my describing him, he exclaimed, with a benign indifference :

“ O, it must have been Brother Peppery ; he is one of the radicals I spoke to you about last night — the man who has left us to our fate. But never mind, — he can do nothing.”

“ But I cannot see how my sermon should have so displeased him.”

“ Ah, it was n't the sermon ; though, perhaps, he may allege something of that kind ; it was your success that irritated him.”

“ My success ? I don't understand how that —”

“ Why, you must recollect that Peppery was a particular admirer of Brother Stringent, whom, according to his statement, the parish drove away. Now, a preacher who pleases the parish must be a different man from Brother Stringent, and, consequently, a man whom Brother Peppery cannot like. The moment, therefore, he perceived that you were likely to suit the views of the society, he made up his mind that you would *not* suit his. You see how it is ?”

“ He must be a hasty man ; how does he know but —”

“ It is impossible to manage him. His head is turned by preposterous notions of reform. Garrisonianism has ruined him.”

In the evening, there being no service, several members of the parish came in, to make the acquaintance of the new minister, and talk over the prospects of the society under my administration.

“What a superb congregation!” became a stereotyped remark.

“I am glad to be able to say to our pastor,” observed a Mr. Wilkins, “that his discourses gave, so far as I can learn, the most entire satisfaction.”

“O, I am sure they did,” said a Miss Lark,—a young lady whose personal attractions I had remarked,—“they reminded me of the poems of Moore.”

Reminded her of the poems of Moore! I was never more confounded. What had I been preaching about? Or, was the young lady given to irony?

Nobody else seemed to observe the singularity of the comparison. They went on.

One considered our prosperity secured, in spite of the forebodings of others,—men of little faith, who did not happen to be present.

Another rejoiced over the confusion of the radical party.

Mr. Wilkins congratulated himself on the belief that we should now “draw in the young people;” and Mr. Arlington was confident that we should “take a leading position.”

Mr. Harris thought that we should “draw” from the Episcopal church, the new rector of which was troubled with a diseased throat.

Mr. Gleason had heard that the people at the West End were in “hot water” with their minister; and he presumed we might “recruit” some in that quarter,—a hint which was thought worthy of being improved.

Mr. Fiscal believed that it was a good time to raise the taxes on pews.

To all this I listened, with growing astonishment and perplexity.

I was but a young man, the reader will recollect,—just arrived from the country, and retaining yet the impression of country usages; I was ignorant of many of the methods by which religion is practised and disseminated in cities. Some early prejudices were to be removed, ere I could hope to feel precisely reconciled to these new customs.

“When shall the installation take place?” asked Mr. Wilkins.

“The sooner the better, I think,” said Mr. Gleason; “the community ought to know that we are up and doing.”

“What does our pastor say?” demanded Mr. Arlington.

“I had not thought of the subject.”

“Suppose we say next Sunday evening. Would that be too soon?”

“Rather soon, it seems to me. I should prefer to delay it a month, at least.”

“That seems a long time. The people are ready for the service already.”

“I thank them for their ready confidence; but a service that implies so permanent a relation between pastor and people ought not to take place prematurely. Let us postpone the installation until we shall have matured the acquaintance somewhat.”

“ Well, be it so,” said Mr. Arlington ; “ I am not afraid that the interest will decline, if the service is postponed. In the mean time, I will see Brother Resounder, and engage him to preach the sermon.”

And thus passed my first Sunday at Bubbleton.

IV.

I RECEIVE A VISIT.

THE next morning, while I was employed in writing a letter, a middle-aged gentleman, with a small cane and a bundle, walked into the room, and, extending his hand, introduced himself as Mr. Oracular Blunt, the pastor of a small parish in the neighboring town of D——.

“I heard you were to begin the campaign yesterday,” he said; “and so I thought I’d ride over this morning, and pay you a brotherly call. At the same time — availing myself of the opportunity — I have bought a little merchandise for my wife,” — pointing to the bundle.

I thanked him heartily for having been so thoughtful as to come and see me, thus early; for I was anxious, of course, to make the acquaintance of my ministerial neighbors, all of whom were personally unknown to me. I had heard Brother Oracular Blunt mentioned as a faithful minister, though a little conceited, and considerably eccentric.

“I never met you before,” he remarked, taking possession of the seat I had placed for him; “you look young for a place like this.”

“I fear that I am quite too young for the place,” said I.

“However, you will be older before you leave — in experience, at least.”

“Yes, undoubtedly.”

“This parish generally succeeds in maturing its ministers.”

“Mr. Arlington tells me it is not a difficult parish.”

“I dare say he does. I believe dictators are not commonly difficult — to please — if they are permitted to have their own way.”

“You make me a little apprehensive. I hope —”

“Never mind; since the world is to be saved, the Gospel must be preached. A cargo of missionaries have been sent to Burmah, and — you have been sent to Bubbleton. The Lord only knows which has the most promising field! The Jews rejected their prophets, and so does Bubbleton; but I suppose God will have mercy on both, at last.”

“Really, you suggest some very comforting ideas!”

“Never mind, I say, the world must be converted —”

“And martyrdom is not yet become obsolete.”

“— The world must be converted, and somebody must bear the idiotic vanities of this stiff-necked generation. Why not you, as well as anybody else? Since, by a mysterious ordinance of Providence, Bubbleton and the Sandwich Islands happen to lie within the province which the Almighty has promised to an-

nex to his kingdom, why, we must all do what we can to civilize both, and so prepare his way ! ”

I laughed ; but, really, the observation had no very pleasant sound to my ears.

“ Is the reputation of the parish, then, so very bad ? ” I inquired.

“ Not so bad as it might be ; it has a few just men. ”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Rather more than were found in Sodom, I think ; so you need not fear that the Lord will consume it, at least while it remains in your charge. ”

He had spoken with an expression of countenance indicating perfect seriousness. His eccentricity was a little puzzling to one who, like myself, happened to be a stranger to its freaks. I looked at him, in silence.

“ Yes, ” he continued, “ there are some just-minded men in your parish, but you will not fall in with them just yet. They are modest, and will allow themselves to be thrust aside. You will see only the managers for the first few weeks. There are sensible women in the parish ; but don’t expect to hear a word from their lips under three months. You will first be taken up by the frivolous, the *lackadaisical*, the languishing caste,—those who admire a preacher’s voice—if it be agreeable—more than the truth he utters, and who would give all that Paul ever wrote concerning the grace of God, for another poem in the style of Lalla Rookh or of Mazeppa ! I exhort you to endure

the distracting nonsense and chaotic babbling of these dear ladies, with all patience and long-suffering. A wiser generation will doubtless provide a suitable asylum for all such unfortunates; but, so long as they remain at large, one must be merciful to their infirmities! Only, remember to adopt and follow this rule, that whatever they recommend or suggest for you to do is in all cases to be avoided, as being preposterous and illegitimate counsel!"

Thus he went on, amusing, alarming, and annoying me, by turns.

"But don't let me discourage you," he resumed; "it is a good place for discipline, after all. What says our lyrical Lord Byron, whom you are destined to hear quoted so often? —

‘The rugged metal of the mine
Must burn before its surface shine.’

This was not said in allusion to ministers, I grant, — yet it applies to them very well. Allow that Bubbleton proves a sort of *crucible* to you — all the gold there is in your nature will become brighter for the trial. Suffering is God's favorite process for perfecting his ministers. You suggested; a while ago, that martyrdom is not yet obsolete. 'Tis very true. The martyrdoms of the early church were symbolical of the sufferings ordained for the ministry of Christ, in all ages. The man who is comfortable, in the ordinary sense of that term, while pursuing this vocation, must be unfaithful to its demands. It is a life of

unceasing sacrifices — of never-ending toil. It is a warfare — a crusade against the idols which mankind worship, the false deities they adore.

“Is it to be expected that they will make him happy while he is thus overturning their gods? Depend upon it, they are not so grateful for the service he renders them. They sooner put him out of the synagogue.

“Still, these trials are neither to be avoided nor boasted of. They have their use, else God would never have imposed them. And, since they benefit us, it is scarcely modest to boast of the courage with which we receive them.”

I was silent, and he presently continued :

“I should not have favored you with this tirade against Bubbleton, and this lecture on martyrdom, had it not been for an accidental meeting with Mr. Fiscal, this morning. The worldly enthusiasm and gross calculation which that man carries into his church, stirs my spirit with indignation.

“He would have the affairs of God’s church conducted in such a manner as to imply that there is no God in the universe. He is as far from Christ as a Papist. He ought to be a pedler of indulgences.

“The tone in which he spoke of the services of yesterday, of your abilities, and of the expectations of the parish, reminded me of an auctioneer. Unfortunately, there are but too many others in the congregation who resemble him. They exhibit the same mercenary spirit in the affairs of the church, that

marks their business pursuits. They think, not of the conversion of the world, but of the aggrandizement of the parish; not of character, but fashion."

I admitted that I had been forced to the same conclusion.

"I am glad you see the matter in its true light," he resumed. "I wanted to see you, talk with you, and find out what stuff you are made of. After the provocation of this morning, I wanted to preach a little, and I wanted, if possible, a sensible hearer. I know something of this parish, having observed its movements during some ten years. I know that it will spoil a weak minister, and expel a wilful one. I hope to God, for your own sake and that of Bubbleton, that you are neither one nor the other."

I thanked him sincerely for the kind interest and good sense which his language and manner exhibited. I began to admire his blunt frankness. There was an air of sturdy Christian manliness about him, that became more and more conspicuous.

He arose to go.

"My own little parish is only three miles distant," he observed; "and, soon as you can get away with propriety, come over and see where I live."

"I should be most happy —"

"Don't look after any needless formalities. Of course, I shall watch your progress with much interest. By and by, if you please, we will have an exchange. True, I am not very popular in your parish,—they complain that I am frightfully bold,

and all that; but they will submit to a sermon or two, once a year,—that is, those who don't leave the church when they see me enter the pulpit."

"Never mind," said I; "we will exchange, notwithstanding."

"And some day, Brother Resounder will preach for them, and charm away the rankling memory of my homely truths. Well, one finds difficulties in preaching the Gospel, owing to the various imbecilities of men, not only in Bubbleton, but also in Calcutta!"

V.

MAKING PASTORAL CALLS.

ANXIOUS to form an acquaintance with the parish, individually, and to learn as much as possible about their peculiarities, so that I might adjust my ministry to their circumstances wisely, I began the routine of "making calls" that very week. Furnished by Mr. Arlington with the names of "the leading families," and with the numbers of their residences, I accomplished a good deal of this kind of work in the course of three or four afternoons.

I know ministers who consider this the most unpleasant duty they have to fulfil. To go about from house to house, with the persistence of a tax-gatherer, ringing door-bells, bowing, smiling, shaking hands with ladies, patting the heads of children (perhaps kissing them, if their faces happen to be clean), asking pastoral questions, answering compliments, talking about the weather, the parish, the late minister, hearing Mrs. A.'s complaints about her rheumatism, Mrs. B.'s narrative of the "rappings," Mrs. C.'s murmurs at the want of good society, Mrs. D.'s

praises of her son who is in college,—in short, plunging, again and again, into a chaos of small talk, and a labyrinth of confused interests,—these things seem, to some men, the hardest of all mortal afflictions.

But, for my own part, I rather enjoy the mild excitement and diversified sensations produced by these friendly visits.

What is more agreeable than to take the hands of those who have agreed to be your friends—to give a candid hearing to your counsel, to repose in you the tenderest confidence? What is more pleasant than to be familiar with the HOMES of those to whom you are connected by the holiest and friendliest of ties,—to see countenances light up when you appear, and regrets betrayed when you depart,—to have perplexing cares committed to your wisdom, and heart-breaking troubles reposed on your faithful affection? What can be more *interesting* than to observe the innumerable phases in which our common humanity exhibits itself, in the different families with which you become acquainted, and under the pressure of various and ever-changing circumstances?

Many a sermon, which no book could suggest, have I obtained from these very “calls,” which so many stigmatize as, “frivolous.”

Some poet speaks of finding sermons in stones, and I have often queried whether the allusion might not be to the *lap-stones* of certain shoemakers whom I visit. However that may be, I can bear witness that

excellent sermons are to be had of *wash-tubs*, if one but has the tact to interpret their spiritual significance.

But this is getting beyond the strict limits of Bubbleton Parish. Let me return.

In the progress of my acquaintance with the Bubbleton people, I found that Brother Stringent had left more friends in the parish than Mr. Arlington had given me reason to suppose. I did not find that unanimity of sentiment which I had been led to expect. Indeed, as well as I could ascertain, there was quite a serious division in the society, growing out of the dismissal of the late pastor. Some had even refused to hear the new clergyman preach, and talked of taking seats in other churches. These did not give me an over-cordial greeting.

"It is of no use," they said; "the parish will never prosper, or have peace, while under its present ill-considered management."

"You must form no expectations from the congregations you had last Sunday," one lady remarked; "for not half the people you saw belong to the parish. Most of them are mere novelty-seekers; they fly from one church to another, as excitement moves them; they are as unreliable as the wind. Next Sunday, like as not, they will be in pursuit of some new attraction. Bubbleton is full of just such frivolous folks."

"You'd better have staid in New Hampshire," said a frank, harsh-looking old gentleman, "than

come to preach for such a possessed set of beings as these Bubbleton gentry. They will harrow the life out of you, even if you are nine times endowed — as my grimalkin, there, is said to be. They will make you a candidate for the mad-house, in three months.”

Such unwelcome statements and dismal prophecies, however, I was not doomed to hear everywhere. Indeed, promises and plaudits enough were sounded in my ears to counteract much of their doleful effect.

One acquaintance which I formed, during this first week, is deserving of a particular notice, on account of the sad, but profitable, intimacy to which it led, and the noble lesson it furnished me.

The case to which I allude, was that of a young man, hopelessly disabled by a spinal disease. He was just married to an interesting young woman, when this great affliction seized him. Neither had any pecuniary resources but the avails of their daily labor; and, after the husband became confined to his bed, the burden devolved upon the wife. A few benevolent people in the parish came to her assistance, with timely gifts and cordial sympathy; but her lot, with all these alleviations, was still sad enough, as the least sensible reader will acknowledge.

On my first visit to the Herricks, I saw only the husband, the wife having gone out in pursuit of work. I was struck by the evidence of acute suffering, and hopeless prostration, which the young man's appearance presented. His hair had become gray; deep lines seamed his colorless forehead; his cheeks

were wasted almost to the bone ; and his eyes had that intense, *pleading* expression, which is imparted only by protracted pain. His disease, moreover, involved a muscular contraction of the limbs, which, at times, was so great as to produce an agony almost beyond human endurance, and which rendered him an object of most painful commiseration.

Still, there was a look of cheerfulness in the sick man's face, and an utterance of submissive trust in his voice, that seemed to divert one's attention from his bodily affliction. The power of Christian faith transfigured his distorted and emaciated frame. He evidently possessed that strength of which the strong man cannot boast, and that peace- which the fortunate never know.

When, in the course of our conversation, I congratulated him on the serene fortitude with which he bore his sufferings, a change passed over his features, like the shadow of some momentous memory. He appeared to struggle with himself, for an instant ; after which his spirit rallied, and he replied, cheerfully :

“ Ah, Brother Chester, it has taken me a long time to secure this state of mind.

“ In the beginning of my affliction, for months, I was very wretched. I could not submit to the loss of my manly activity and independence, and the hopes I had cherished so fondly on my wedding day, without first murmuring a great deal.

“ I could find no goodness in the dark providence

that suddenly deprived me of all that one is apt to prize most in this world, and that doomed me to a life of dependence, suffering, and obscurity. O, those were miserable days, indeed! My ignorance and superficial experience did not enable me to perceive the lofty *uses* which such trials may have, under inscrutable but beneficent wisdom.

“ Brother Stringent came and talked with me. He imparted to me new views, and placed my mind in an attitude of submission. I shall never forget the persuasiveness of his words,—the calm, Christian earnestness of his counsel,—the uplifting fervor of his prayers. God bless him! I hear that the parish did not treat him well; but he is a man whom the injustice of the world can never really harm.

“ From that time, I have been troubled by no doubts. I have ceased to complain. If I do not see the exact necessity of the affliction, I believe, nevertheless, that it will be revealed finally. As one looking through a glass darkly, I partially discern God’s purpose in these trials, even now; ultimately, I do not doubt, the whole mystery will become transparent, and I shall know, even as I am known.

“ When I was a careless, active boy, I remember to have seen, occasionally, a very decrepit and helpless old woman. She lived near by my mother’s cottage, and, besides being unable to work, was very poor. I used to be sent, now and then, to carry her some luxury; and I remember thinking to myself how extremely wretched and forlorn she must be.

And yet she always seemed happy, and her singular resignation and contentment were frequently spoken of by the neighbors.

“It was all a mystery to me, then; but I have since learned that our heavenly Father never leaves human beings without resources according to the demands of their circumstances. Some refuge is always available, if we but have the humility and patience to seek it.”

Thus, with unaffected piety and trust, the sick man conversed.

Sometimes, as I found, he was able to read, and occasionally his wife took time to read aloud to him. He had thus been enabled to amass a treasury of knowledge, which helped to employ his mind, and to divert his thoughts from desponding objects.

His mind was a kingdom, and the sovereignty he exercised was blessed.

Every minister will bear evidence to the salutary influence of such scenes in promoting his own trustfulness, fortitude, and piety.

Often, during my residence in Bubbleton, when worn down by exhausting cares, irritated by petty persecutions, and tormented by cruel anxieties, and almost ready to fly from the field, have I entered the sick room of Brother Herrick, and found that strength and courage which were elsewhere denied.

• VI.

CONCERNING A YOUNG LADY.

OWING to some difficulty in finding a suitable boarding-house, my stay at Mr. Arlington's was protracted a number of weeks. I thus had an opportunity of becoming quite intimately acquainted with that gentleman and with his family. I ought to qualify the observation far enough, however, to admit that I really obtained no better insight of *his* character, during a constant observation of it for the term of five weeks, than I had obtained the first evening I spent at his house. He was always pleasant in his demeanor, sociable, dignified, and polite. Nothing ruffled or jarred his equanimity.

Mrs. Arlington was not, in any respect, a remarkable woman. She was a plain, good-natured, well-bred housekeeper, loving her family, and living contentedly and quietly in her sphere. She would never have become a Woman's Rights agitator, on any terms. Her sons resembled her, in temperament and character.

Neither of the three will occupy a conspicuous position in these records.

As for Miss Arlington,—the young lady who re-

galed my troubled fancy with music, the first evening I passed at Bubbleton,—she became to me the most interesting object of study the house afforded. This may be thought too self-evident a fact for notice, considering that I was not a married man,—more especially when I proceed to state that she was young, ordinarily good-looking, and rather brilliantly accomplished. But I must not suffer my readers to cherish any unnecessary delusion, however natural and innocent, in reference to the secret of my interest in Miss Arlington. I will state the precise truth.

That young lady appeared to be one of those intellectual females who are given to reserve, to reveries, to vague and insatiable aspirations,—whom their own sex denominate “haughty,” and whom we men consider “eccentric.” A man seldom falls in love with such a phenomenon, though he may find much entertainment in her society. She interests his reason and imagination, but rarely awakens his affections.

This is all that need be said, at the present stage of the narrative, as regards this question.

I had been in the family circle some two weeks before Miss Arlington seemed to be actually conscious of my existence. I had never before been the victim of such apparent obliviousness; and I felt, at times, singularly diminished, in spite of all the self-esteem I could invoke.

She had played and sung on two occasions, at my solicitation; but without the slightest demonstration of interest in my opinion, but, rather, as though she

were performing for her own amusement, in the depths of utter solitude.

One morning, on descending to the parlor, I found her gazing abstractedly from a window. Her usual unconsciousness possessed her ; and it was not until I had overthrown a chair that I received the compliment of "good-morning." Determined to make one decisive effort to engage her in conversation, I introduced some seasonable topic ; but all the response I obtained was two monosyllables, and a look that quite froze the organ of language.

Even in church, my success was scarcely better ; for her ladyship never looked toward the pulpit, whether she heard a word of the sermon or not.

At length, however, a change began to be visible. She condescended to observe me, even to study my face, somewhat narrowly. Sometimes, she appeared to listen to my observations.

It happened, one day, that she came into the room where I sat alone, reading, and took a seat near me, with some ornamental work in her hand.

Knowing her predisposition for reveries, I did not offer to lay aside my book until she had startled me with the abrupt observation —

"I wish you had never come to Bubbleton, Mr. Chester !"

"You are very frank, Miss Arlington," said I ;
"thank you !"

I think I must have been a little provoked.

"Please to understand me ; I mean no discourtesy ;

it would have been better for us all. Bubbleton is no place for an independent minister."

"Then you deem me such an one, I suppose," I said, relenting.

"You certainly *ought* to be," said she, looking me keenly in the face; "and I think you are — by nature."

"And you think the parish will not brook independence?"

"Look at Mr. Stringent. Will it be any different with you?"

"The prospect is not flattering, I must confess. Still, your father assures me that it is not a difficult parish."

"My father has views respecting the management of the parish which no clergyman will ever verify. He holds principles which you will never carry out; and the result will be disagreement, conflict, and a rupture."

"That is an issue which I hope to avoid; is it inevitable?"

"You can avoid it only by base concessions, which I cannot think you capable of making, without insulting you."

I was silent, regarding her with astonishment. She continued:

"What pleasure can one take in seeing you here as my father's guest, when it is morally certain that you will be enemies in six months? What satisfaction can be found in a friendship so precarious? What are all these amenities but deceptive and cruel mock-

eries? I cannot bear that you should longer be kept in ignorance of your fate."

The girl certainly spoke with earnestness and with feeling.

"Thank you for your warning, Miss Arlington," said I, after considering her words; "I will endeavor to profit by it."

"I wish you might. Pardon me for having pained you; but I have notified you of nothing but what you will verify. O, Mr. Chester, why does any man ever resolve on being a minister?"

"Because duty impels him, and God requires his work."

"Duty! — God!" she murmured; "can belief in these, indeed, be so strong?"

And, rising, she passed slowly from the room, leaving me to ruminate on her singular words and demeanor.

VII.

COLLISION WITH MR. PEPPERY.

THOSE who have favored me with a perusal of these truthful records, thus far, will have perceived that I did not begin my course at Bubbleton under the happiest auspices. Indeed, the statements I received on almost all hands depressed my spirits not a little, in spite of Mr. Arlington's dignified and serene confidence, and the hopeful hosannas of some half-dozen brethren besides.

Still, I resolved to do the best my situation admitted of. The enthusiasm of a large part of the parish, — however superficial and transient I may have felt it to be, — and the numerous auditory that filled the church every Sabbath, appealed powerfully to my ambition, and stimulated my mind to extreme exertion.

At home, I studied laboriously, and made the best preparation for the pulpit that lay in my power. Abroad, I exerted myself to harmonize the discordant elements which had distracted the society, and to give unity and sobriety to its purposes and wishes.

Nor must the reader suppose that I was entirely unsuccessful.

I actually found those who were susceptible to reasonable arguments and Christian persuasions; those in whom a "sense of duty" was perceivable, in spite of sophistry, and prejudice, and pride; those whose moral natures were sound enough to admit of driving a pungent exhortation, and of clinching a thorough conviction.

As my friend, Mr. Oracular Blunt, had said, there were some "just-minded men" and "sensible women" in Bubbleton.

In extending my intercourse with the parish, I found many who might have reflected honor upon any congregation,—humble, modest, Christian men and women, cherishing holy purposes in the retirement of their homes, and fulfilling the law of love in the temper of their lives.

After the lapse of a month, I suffered the installation to take place.

Agreeably to Mr. Arlington's wishes, the Rev. Mr. Resounder preached the sermon. It was the first effort of this celebrated preacher which I was permitted to hear. Eloquent, it certainly was, and *impressive*, in a certain sense; but it was a discourse much better adapted to the lyceum than to the church,—better calculated to charm the ear and exercise the fancy, than to penetrate the heart or stimulate the conscience.

I have lived to discover an essential difference between a true, Christian sermon, and a gracefully-written and captivating essay. The one deals with the

most solemn and imperative of all subjects, the most permanent and precious of all interests; and its aim is to convict, alarm, humble, encourage, and renovate man's perverted heart. The other deals with subjects of secondary importance,—even of trivial and transient interest, perhaps,—and may, with propriety, assume a holiday costume, and march with the pomp and splendor of brilliant rhetoric.

But the Rev. Mr. Resounder's sermon captivated Bubbleton.

The *Morning News* devoted more than a column to the setting forth of its surpassing merits. The editor was a politician, in the obvious, modern sense of the term; and no doubt the holy experiences and avocations of the man constituted him an excellent judge of such matters.

In due time, board and rooms were secured for me in a family connected with the parish, and nothing was wanting to realize my actual settlement in Bubbleton. Nor let me omit, in this place, the acknowledgment of certain presents, appropriate to the forlorn situation of a bachelor minister, for which I was indebted to the kind foresight and effective zeal of the cultivated Miss Lark.

And I take pleasure in adding, that this young lady's judgment appeared far more discriminating, when exercised in the domestic sphere, than when brought to bear on the subtleties of literary comparisons.

Almost the first visitor I had the honor of receiving

at my new home was Mr. Peppery, the nervous radical, of whom mention has been made.

Mr. Peppery was a man of quick movement, rapid speech, and remorseless frankness. He did not hamper himself with any conventional ceremonies, nor approach his subject by any indirect by-ways of circumlocution, but came down upon you by the shortest cut, and with overwhelming abruptness and audacity. His countenance wore the same scowl I had observed upon it the day he bolted out of church, and he took my hand with about as much cordiality as one might be expected to exhibit towards a red-hot poker.

"I have called to ask you to preach a sermon on the atrocious and abominable sin of American slavery," said he; "will you do it?"

I told him that I expected to call attention to that subject, in the course of my ministry in Bubbleton; but that I desired first to secure the friendship and confidence of the people, in order that my appeals in behalf of the slave might be as effective as possible.

"That won't do — it won't do at all!" cried Mr. Peppery, rising from his chair, and stepping rapidly about the room; "such a course is unbecoming the independence and dignity of a Christian pulpit — unbecoming the faithfulness that should characterize a minister of Christ. Away, sir, with timeserving — away with compromises! It's your business to preach the truth, sir, — the naked truth, — whether men will hear or whether they will not. 'He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully: What is the



INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER PEPPERY.



chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord.' What does it signify whether you have the friendship and confidence of the people or not, if you only declare God's will, and uphold his cause against the mighty?"

"Brother Peppery," said I, as soon as I was able to speak, "I want you to understand me. I profess as much abhorrence of slavery as you, or any other man, can feel. I profess as great a desire to see it abolished, and have as much confidence in my method —"

"The same old story!" broke in Mr. Peppery; "profession! profession! Don't every conservative fossil here at the North claim the same thing? O, yes! we all have the holiest abhorrence of slavery, but that does n't prevent our helping to extend its dominion; we all sympathize with the slave, and, perhaps, even dare to pray for him,—but neither our sympathies nor prayers knock a single fetter from his limbs, or avert from his lot a single pang of wrong. Out upon such professions! —away with such miserable cant! —don't mock Heaven and humanity with such detestable hypocrisy! Confess, at once, that you love oppression more than justice!"—

"Brother Peppery," cried I, interrupting his invective, "let us reason together, calmly, and not run into excitements that provoke uncharitable reflections."

"Am I uncharitable?" demanded Mr. Peppery. "Well, I am not indifferent, thank God! to the fate of three millions of fellow-beings. No; I will lift

up my voice like a trumpet, and show this apostate nation its transgression, and the timid churches their sins! I will cry aloud, and spare not."

"Will you hear me, my friend?" said I, holding fast to my patience.

"Hear you? Of course I will. Go ahead. Justify yourself, if you can!" cried the reformer, regarding me with a look of contempt and defiance.

"You are willing to allow, I hope, that men may honestly differ as to the BEST METHODS of effecting the overthrow of slavery, or the wisest means of promulgating the reform. It is not to be expected that we should all adopt the same views. You have your opinion — your method; so I have mine. Let us not wrangle about these things. I have traced out a certain line of procedure, which I shall pursue until I am shown a better. You talk of the independence and dignity of the pulpit; but could I exemplify these by renouncing my method and adopting yours? You speak of the faithfulness that should characterize the minister; but how is this faithfulness to be exhibited, but by acting according to the dictates of his own conscience?"

"That's all plausible enough, in appearance, I'll allow," responded Mr. Peppery; "but it's an argument that shelters every kind of cowardice and selfishness. I find that most men's *consciences* are apt to dictate a course which it is extremely pleasant to follow out; and MINISTERS' consciences most readily adopt the views of those rich and influential parish-

ioners, of whom your friend, Mr. Arlington, is a most distinguished type."

This outrageous remark stretched my endurance till it snapped.

Something burnt my face like the glare of a furnace. The room seemed, all at once, oppressively warm. Amazement and anger paralyzed my tongue.

But the impudence of the man had not entirely spent itself.

"Show me a conscience," he continued, "that will marshal a man in the ranks of a minority, and link him, body and soul, with an unpopular and persecuted party, and I'll believe in it. Yes, show me a conscience like the brave Garrison's, or faithful Brother Stringent's, or that of any man who suffers and dies for the truth's sake, and I'll not be afraid to trust it; but away with hireling consciences, and pampered sycophants, and all the rubbish of poltroonery and deceit!"

"Mr. Peppery," exclaimed I, in a voice that betrayed the emotion I felt, "since you have entirely forgotten all the dictates of Christian courtesy, and render abuse with much more facility than you render reason, I shall have no more discourse with you on this subject. And I regret, very much, that the anti-slavery cause ever incurred the reproach of such a misguided and intolerant advocate."

"*Your* regrets!" sneered the hot-headed reformer, buzzing about the room like an imprisoned bee, and

gesticulating like a mad little fury, as he was,—“and Mr. Arlington’s regrets,—ha, ha!”

“I beg you will understand,” said I, “that I wish this interview closed. You must perceive that it cannot be profitably prolonged, under present circumstances.”

“In other words, you wish to turn me out of doors!” screamed the little reformer. “Well, that is courtesy — *conservative* courtesy, an’t it?”

But I was not obliged to answer, for Mr. Peppery darted through the door-way, as he flung off the last word, and disappeared in a frightful spasm of anger.

I walked the apartment, for an hour, trying to compose myself, and to exorcise the fiery image of the little reformer from my imagination.

If Mr. Arlington represented Scylla, Mr. Peppery not inaptly imaged Charybdis; and how to pilot my course safely between the rock of offence and the furious whirlpool, was the problem which it became me to study, with all seriousness and devotion.

VIII.

A NIGHT-SCENE.

IF a knowledge of the strong conservative element that predominated in the parish tended to render my preaching too abstract, there were also influences that inclined me to "make a practical application" of my principles to the exigences of the time, and the condition of the people, as will appear in what I am now going to relate.

Not long after my stormy interview with the little reformer, Mr. Peppery, it happened that I was making my way homeward from the sewing-circle, at about nine o'clock in the evening, and that, in passing through a dark and narrow street, in the outskirts of the town, I was startled by two or three loud cries, accompanied by other sounds of violence. I stopped, and listened with apprehension.

In less than a minute, a door was flung open, just opposite the spot where I was standing, and a woman, with her dress disordered and hair dishevelled, rushed, screaming, into the street.

An instant later, she was followed by a little girl, who, almost reduced to nakedness, seemed wild with terror and pain.

Then appeared, in the partially illuminated doorway, a figure more wretched still. It was that of a half-clad, ragged, unshaven man, with distorted countenance, reeling form, and wild, vehement gestures, not to mention the demoniacal voice and frenzied speech, with which the miserable inebriate proclaimed his degradation and his guilt.

“O, save us! for God’s sake, somebody save my child!” shrieked the woman, flinging up her arms in supplication.

Then, perceiving that the girl had made her escape, she sunk upon the ground, sobbing and wringing her hands, bitterly.

As for the drunkard, he did not pursue them; but, after swinging his arms to and fro, for an instant, and gibbering like a fiend, he withdrew into the house.

During this scene, which had occupied scarcely a minute, I had remained invisible; and I had scarcely recovered from the alarm into which it had thrown me, before a crowd began to gather on the spot, attracted, naturally enough, by the poor woman’s screams.

“Another of old Gorman’s tantrums!” I heard one of the men say; “if the old rascal would only break his neck in one of his sprees, what a blessing it would be,—to his family especially!”

“Hush!” said another, softly, “here they are, poor things, turned into the street, and mauled half to death, I dare say!”

“O, Lord, what shall we do? what will become of

us ? ” moaned the woman. Her little girl was sobbing by her side.

At the same moment, there was a hearty cheer from the crowd.

A tall, powerful-looking man strode forward, and, approaching the outcasts, lifted them from the ground, and said, kindly,

“ Come with me, my poor friends ; I will give you shelter, to-night, and then we will see what can be done for the future.”

“ O, sir, you are very, very kind,” cried the woman ; “ but it an’t right for us to trouble you so much. A great many times already — ”

“ Never mind,” answered the man, leading off his charge as he spoke ; “ Lord ! we must all do what we can for each other. I guess you could n’t stay here in the street all night ; and as for Bill Gorman, I reckon he’ll have as much as he can do to take care of number one.”

The crowd gave him another loud cheer as he disappeared.

“ If it was n’t for Harry Hanson,” remarked one of the men, addressing himself to me, “ the Lord only knows what would become of the Gormans. When the old Turk gets high, and drives his wife and child out of doors, Harry is pretty sure to take them in, till the old dog gets sober again. When the expense of quenching his thirst has been so great as to leave nothing wherewith to buy bread, and clothing, and fuel, who comes to the rescue so promptly as that

large-limbed and large-hearted blacksmith? O, he is a jewel of a man, sir,—the only man I ever knew fit to be a king.”

“Ah, ah! a long life to Harry Hanson!” responded an old man, who had been listening to the other’s words; “but I remember when Billy Gorman was thought to rank with the best of men. I have known him from his youth. We were in college at the same time. Billy was an ambitious student, and a keen scholar. ’T was thought he ’d become famous. But, somehow, drink got the better of him, and he went down, down, down. Poor Billy! it was drink that did it all.”

The old man switched his coat-sleeve across his eyes, and then resumed:

“I remember Billy Gorman’s wedding, as though it had been only yesterday. The bride came from Providence, where people thought her quite a belle. She was real handsome, I can assure you; and her heart seemed so gay, and her laugh rung so joyously, that one would have said she saw not a single cloud hanging over her future days. Poor girl! if she had got but a glimpse of the dreary lot that waited her, she must have died on the spot, in pure despair; and a happy thing it would have been for her, considering how Billy has carried on, and what a life she’s led with him.

“Ah,” continued the old man, bringing his coat-sleeve in use again, “I’ve seen many sad changes, and bitter contrasts, and heart-breaking disappoint-

ments, in my time ; but my old eyes never saw a sight that went to my heart like this,—Billy Gorman driving his own sweet wife into the street, with blows and beastly abuse, and forcing her to seek a shelter with strangers. May God pardon him, and make him atone for the crime, even yet, the wretched man ! ”

“ He deserves hanging ! ” exclaimed one of the bystanders, moved to indignation by the old man’s affecting reminiscences.

“ Ah, it’s all the work of drink,” answered the old man ; “ there’s not a better or more sensible man than Billy Gorman, anywhere, when he’s free of liquor.”

“ Then why don’t he keep free ? ” demanded the other. “ I’d like to give him a taste of the pump ! ”

“ Alas, it’s the old story,” rejoined the old man ; “ he’s no longer master of himself ; he’s a slave to his appetite, and it’s bearing him on to perdition fast.”

“ This rum-dealing is an infamous business,” remarked the individual who had dwelt upon the generosity of Harry Hanson ; “ an infamous business,” he repeated, with emphasis, “ because it thrives on the worst passions, and most shameful weaknesses, of mankind. I wonder how any man who pursues it can respect himself, or hold up his head among decent men. For my part, I don’t envy Rob Fiscal the money he gets from such miserable wretches as this Bill Gorman ; it would burn my hands like the price of murder.”

I started, at the sound of the name he had mentioned.

“Is it Robert Fiscal, of Wine-street, to whom you allude?” inquired I.

“Yes, sir, he is the man,” he returned; “he has made a fortune in the liquor-trade, and how many families he has helped to ruin can’t be told. It is at his store that Gorman spends all his money, and learns the art of turning his family adrift on the world. And yet this man claims respectability, moves in what is called the best society, and belongs to one of the leading churches. I would like to be his minister for a single day —”

I started again, and felt myself blushing to the roots of my hair; but, fortunately, the darkness rendered my face invisible, and I saw no reason for supposing that I had been recognized.

“— I would thunder upon his conscience a few of those old Bible truths, which he seems to have forgotten, and of which little seems to be said in his church,” pursued the man, warming with the importance of his subject.

I pursued my way homeward, without waiting to hear more.

Robert Fiscal — as the reader may have surmised — was “one of our leading men;” but I did not find the reflection particularly comforting, at this moment.

Indeed, I began to be conscious that a most unpleasant duty devolved upon me, in reference to this respectable brother and his thriving business. Al-

ready I beheld Bubbleton in fierce commotion, and myself an exile from its polished associations and sultry friendship.

At home, another surprise awaited me. On entering the study, I was greeted by the sight of a very luxurious chair, having an elaborate appendage for writing purposes, and surmounted by a piece of exquisite carving. I was sure that it could not have cost less than fifty dollars. To a young man of my simple tastes and limited observation, it was a gift of enormous grandeur, and I could not but render silent homage to the generosity that bestowed it.

I presently discovered that a neat little note was attached to the chair, the perusal of which left me in a state of mind not easily described. It contained the compliments, &c., of my "dear friend and brother, ROBERT FISCAL" !

IX.

MR. FISCAL'S PRESENT.

DURING some minutes, my mind was agitated by a violent struggle. I paced the room, contending, at every step, with the selfish suggestions that beleaguered me. But, in the end, my resolution triumphed, and conscience put the base herd of tempters to flight.

"Mr. Robert Fiscal," said I, addressing the chair in the name of its donor, "I shall avoid the snare you have so adroitly contrived. I will not forswear my ministerial faithfulness on any such terms. You can't have my conscience for such a paltry consideration. Conscience is supposed to be the heart of one's manhood, Robert Fiscal, and I ought to prize it more than the fine present you have sent me.

"Suppose I accept this luxurious chair, and put my scruples about your trade down under this elastic cushion. Suppose I seat myself here,—stifling a twinge of self-reproach,—and try to compose a Christian sermon. What shall I have for a text, Robert Fiscal? Every passage of Holy Writ that occurs to me seems a little unfitting. I am quite embarrassed in the effort to select a subject. The chair is n't

suggestive; or, rather, it does n't suggest the right things. If I were to write just what it prompts me to say, and rehearse it to you next Sunday from the pulpit, you would declare that I had scandalized the church. I should represent religion to be such an epicurean sort of an affair that even *your* conscience would burst from its lethargy, and brand my speech as infamous!

"I dare say you imagine that I find the chair *comfortable*. Far from it, Robert Fiscal! I should suppose it stuffed with porcupine-quills. You may think me a little superstitious; but that carved rose, just above my head, might have bloomed in Golgotha, considering the ghastly hue it wears as I look upon it now!

"Perhaps I might overcome these whims of feeling, in the course of time, and find the beautiful chair you have given me growing easy and comfortable.

"But there would come a time, if I should live, Robert Fiscal, when — summing up the results of my ministry, in the evening of life, and calculating the amount of integrity with which I had fulfilled its demands — your chair would become transformed into an engine of torment, like the iron bed of Procrustes. And, as the solemn twilight of Time gloomed my dim sight, the pale faces of the poor and wronged would glare upon me, demanding why I, clothed with authority from God, had never pleaded their cause against the wicked and the proud! Ah, Robert Fiscal, I dread your displeasure less than theirs!"

So I went to sleep, firm in the resolution of visiting my parishioner in the morning, and appealing to his conscience against the iniquity of his business. Being addicted to the ancient habit of dreaming, I dreamed that night, that, while I was sitting in Mr. Fiscal's chair, composing a sermon, half a dozen dismally disguised figures entered the room, and bound me securely to my seat. Then it seemed that the seductive chair suddenly changed into one of those horrible contrivances, in which the Romish inquisitors were accustomed to place their victims, before the infliction of the torture. The terror with which this proceeding inspired me dissolved the bands of sleep, and I spent the remainder of the night in arranging a plan of attack for the morrow.

In the morning, I was detained above an hour by a visitor.

He was one of the oldest and most respectable of my parishioners. His name was Silas Willet. His bent frame, supported by a cane, and his venerable countenance, crowned with long white locks, together with his somewhat antiquated style of dress, imparted to him quite a patriarchal air. He had laid the foundation of Bubbleton, while in the prime of life, and was, for many years, its wealthiest, as well as its most reputable, citizen; but a commercial crisis came, and the old man's property was entirely swept away. A man less scrupulously honest would have contrived means for preserving something; but Silas Willet cheerfully made himself a beggar. His chief

earthly trust was now placed in an only son, a young man of generous disposition and promising talents.

Of late, however, young Willet had shown a tendency towards dissipation ; had neglected his business ; frequented questionable society, and treated the counsel of his venerable parent with disrespect. It was only the preceding evening, as the old man now informed me, that the son had become brutally intoxicated, and had betrayed an extreme of depravity that threatened to break the patriarch's heart.

" I have never before known a sorrow like this," said the old man, bitterly. " That the boy whom I reared with such care, and contemplated with such pride,—to whom I gave my own manhood and my untarnished name,—that he should fall thus, and make his old father the witness and victim of his shame,—O, it's the bitterest thought I ever knew in my life ! The only consolation I can realize at all is that his mother did not survive to behold his ruin, and feel the sorrow of this day ! *She*, at least, did not go mourning to her grave."

The poor old man's tears flowed fast, and his voice died away in a groan, as he contemplated the sorrow and disgrace which had so suddenly overtaken his lingering steps.

After I had promised to go and counsel the young man myself, and had administered the meagre consolation which the apparent hopelessness of the case afforded, the patriarch took his departure, and I sallied forth in quest of Robert Fiscal.

The store of this gentleman occupied a conspicuous place on Wine-street, and a large gilt sign announced, in general terms, that "West India Goods" might be had, either by "wholesale or retail," within.

The sign-board was innocent of any intimation concerning "Liquors," and I had not been aware that any were sold on the premises until the last evening. This branch of trade, as it subsequently appeared, monopolized a fine room in the rear of the building, where the "eccentricities" to which it gave occasion might be indulged, with the less risk of incurring scandal.

This arrangement was indicative of a certain change in public opinion, as regarded the respectability of the liquor traffic, which was gradually transpiring twenty years ago. Already, a large and influential part of the community had begun to question the lawfulness of the whole business; and arguments, supported by appalling statistics, and protests, uttered with kindling eloquence, were creating a profound interest throughout the country.

The less thoughtful and more obtuse dealers paid little regard to these significant "signs of the time," but continued to outrage the new ideas which were growing up in their midst, with an obstinate and half-savage indifference.

But those of a more sagacious and conciliatory style of mind, prompted by a kind of prophetic instinct, had already made some concessions to the reformatory opinions. They were less public in their

operations. They endeavored to divert attention from this branch of business by associating it with others, to which they apparently devoted their chief care. They spoke respectfully of the temperance leaders, and expressed a limited sympathy with the new movement.

To this class of dissemblers Robert Fiscal belonged.

X.

THE INTERVIEW.

JUST as I approached the store of Mr. Fiscal, I saw a young man enter, whom I recognized at once as the son of Silas Willet. His unsteady carriage and disfigured features confirmed all that his unhappy parent had said of him.

I followed, and saw him enter the private room, mentioned in the last record.

Here, then, was another witness against my generous parishioner.

Mr. Fiscal was standing by his ledger, in earnest but guarded conversation with a gigantic man, who wore a leathern apron, and had his sleeves tucked up above the elbows. As both were standing with their backs towards the door, my entrance was not observed, nor was I disposed to interrupt an interview of so much apparent interest. I had noticed, however, before taking up a newspaper, and seating myself at the opposite side of the store, that the large man spoke with a muffled sort of vehemence, gesticulating angrily with his bare, brawny arms; and that Mr.

Fiscal, whose countenance wore a troubled look, was making an humble effort to soothe and appease him.

The thought occurred to me that I had chosen an unpropitious moment for executing my mission, and I ran my eyes over the paper with some indecision of purpose. Presently, the large man's words became audible :

“I insist that he shall not have another glass, on any terms. You must promise me that, Mr. Fiscal, or —”

The rest of the sentence did not reach me.

But Mr. Fiscal seemed to conform to the other's demand, as he made a deprecating gesture, and, finally, the man with the apron stalked out of the store.

Then I recognized the kind-hearted blacksmith, whom I had seen taking charge of the inebriate's family, on the preceding night.

Mr. Fiscal's manner expressed some embarrassment when he saw me ; and he studied my countenance a little, in order to discover, I suppose, whether I had become cognizant of the subject of the late conversation. But, anticipating, it is probable, a few compliments upon his generosity, he appeared glad to see me, and invited me to step into the house ; which, by the way, was located quite near.

“Brother Fiscal,” said I, when we were seated alone in the parlor, “I am rather opposed to accepting presents, as valuable as that which your generosity prompted you to send me yesterday.”

His countenance expressed no little surprise at these words.

“My reason is,” continued I, “that such presents seem to place one under peculiar obligations to the givers, so that one does not feel at liberty to regard them precisely like other people. Now, such a situation might prove very embarrassing to a minister. It might prove a hindrance to that independence of speech which his office and position exact, and to that equality of intercourse which he is bound to maintain with his parish. On this account, after thinking much on the affair, I have made up my mind that I ought to decline your generous gift; and I hope you will do me the justice to believe that I do it with worthy motives.”

During the delivery of this rather parliamentary speech, my parishioner's face underwent a variety of changes, in which surprise, shame and resentment, alternately predominated. Nor can I venture to hope that my own face was less expressive of the emotions that were working within my mind; for all my friends tell me that I have the most “tell-tale look,” when under any particular excitement of feeling, they ever saw on a human face.

Hence, feeling, as I did, in my heart, that Mr. Fiscal was a selfish, culpable, scandalous sort of a man, in view of his relations with intemperance, I suppose I couldn't help looking the disagreeable conviction at him pretty *graphically*.

“Well, Brother Chester,” said he, at length, with

an effort at self-recovery, "your reason may be good for the generality of cases, but in the present instance, there is no cause for any scruples of the kind. I beg you will accept the trifling gift I sent you, and, at the same time, consider yourself under no restraint or embarrassing sense of obligation. I wished to offer a slight testimony of the great admiration I feel for your talents —"

But I will not attempt to copy the fulsome sentence.

"Still," pursued the parishioner, "do not think that I would have your judgment of my ill-deserts modified in the least, or your freedom controlled, on account of any such trivial gift. If you see occasion to remind me of any deviation, I hope you will use the utmost freedom, and I shall consider myself indebted to your faithfulness."

That was noble, certainly. I regarded the man with momentary esteem.

"You greatly enhance the value of your present, Brother Fiscal," said I, "by permitting me to retain it on such terms. And the truly noble sentiments you express give me courage to discharge an unpleasant duty, which has been weighing on my mind since last evening."

He started, and a shade passed over his countenance. •

"The truth is, Brother Fiscal, I wish to speak to you in relation to a branch of business in which you are engaged. I am sorry to hear that you deal in intoxicating liquors; and I can't get rid of the convic-

tion, that I ought to reason with you about the impropriety of being connected with such a species of trade. I allude to the matter most reluctantly, you may believe; but of course I should be unworthy of your esteem; and of the confidence of the parish, if I shrunk from the performance of what I feel to be my duty."

I paused to mark the effect of these words.

A frown had gathered on Mr. Fiscal's brow. He sat motionless, with his eyes cast down, and one hand locked convulsively over his watch-chain.

I knew that I had offended him, in spite of his vaunted toleration.

But it was too late now to retract, even had I wished to play the recreant, which, thank Heaven, I did not. I continued:

"I need not dwell upon the many evils that intemperance brings upon community. They are before every man's sight. You, yourself, must be conscious of them. You cannot fail to see, if you will but consider palpable facts, that some **FOUR-FIFTHS** of the crime, pauperism and general misery of society, spring from the use of alcoholic liquors. What a terrible fountain of ruin, Brother Fiscal! Now, what I desire is, that you should ask yourself, your better self, the question, whether it becomes a Christian, or a good citizen, to stand connected with a traffic which involves such unparalleled guilt and suffering.

"Ponder this question, brother, in all candor and

seriousness, and I will abide by the decision to which your conscience may lead you."

Mr. Fiscal rose, and began to pace the room; a common resource with men, when driven to extremities. His face was pale, and his voice unsteady, from the effort he was making to suppress his resentment.

"I find," he observed, "that you have been deceived in reference to the character of *my* business. Do not suppose that *I* keep one of those vulgar dens from which flow so much misery and shame. I make my business respectable, sir, because my customers are *gentlemen*, men who respect themselves; and I do not consider myself answerable — for — the wretchedness — of which you speak."

"Then, my brother," returned I, "permit me to assure you that *you* are deceived; for, last night, I saw one of your customers drive his family into the street, in the madness of intoxication; and, this morning, an old man came to solicit my counsel in behalf of his son, who is also one of your customers, and who is fast descending to ruin, under the same fatal influence."

"There must be some mistake, sir, about these cases," returned Mr. Fiscal, sharply. "I tell you again that I don't keep one of *your vulgar* liquor-shops. I make my business *respectable*; that is, the little I do in that line, for most of my trade, as you may have noticed, has reference to quite other things."

His anger had begun to express itself in words, as

well as in looks, and I saw that nothing was to be done with him.

Nevertheless, I could not help assuring him that there was no mistake about the cases I had alluded to; and, to confirm the assertion, I gave him the names of the parties.

But this only exasperated him the more; and, after making another vain effort to enlist his conscience against his cupidity, I was obliged to leave him, with the conviction that I had only enlisted his enmity against myself.

Perhaps the importance of this affair may seem to be over-rated by the space which I have allowed it to occupy; but, as it was my first case of actual collision with a member of the parish, I thought my readers might like to have a circumstantial statement of it.

XI.

THE LEGEND OF SIR BRASIL AND HIS FALCON.

IT was several days after my inauspicious interview with Robert Fiscal, before I obtained access to the son of Silas Willet. The young man had been running a very destructive career in dissipation, and his character had deteriorated rapidly. Though perfectly sober when I conversed with him, he showed a great deal of surly impatience under my counsel, and a headstrong wilfulness that was discouraging.

Still, I did not leave him until persuaded that I had driven a few wholesome convictions into his torpid heart, and obtained some evidence that he felt the claims I had urged upon him.

My exertions proved more successful than I had dared to hope; if, indeed, the reformation which took place in the young man's habits, soon after, was justly traceable to any influence I had been able to exert,—a supposition which the fact did not altogether warrant, considering what an example of virtue and manliness he was blessed with in the person of his venerable parent.

On the ensuing Sunday, I was not surprised to find Mr. Fiscal's pew vacant. The circumstance attracted

general attention, however, as the liquor-dealer was known to be a prompt church-goer, and, withal, an unequivocal admirer of the new minister.

When I announced the text, in the afternoon, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" the words seemed so pregnant with meaning, that many were the inquiring glances exchanged, and very eager was the look of expectation that shone from the multitude of upturned faces. It seemed to signify that something characteristic of the Bubbleton pulpit was about to transpire; some pyrotechnic display of eloquence, to dazzle the fancy of the gay, or some impertinent innuendo of reform, to startle the placidity of the serious.

The subject of the sermon, as any one would infer, was THE FOLLY OF BEING OFFENDED BY THE UTTERANCE OF THE TRUTH. What is truth? It is God's eternal verity, the *vital principle* upon which the universe is framed. What is the *object* of truth, in relation to *ourselves*? To bring us into harmony with God,—to save us. How, then, should we regard those who proffer us the truth, nay, urge our acceptance of it? As *enemies*? By no means; but as our *friends*, as our true benefactors.

But truth is a blunt, unfashionable quality, and often puts self-conceit out of countenance, and even drives out the money-changers of self-interest. In such cases, what shall we do? Shall we cherish the truth, and resign our pampered favorite? Alas! few of us are wise or strong enough to make the sacrifice, as we foolishly call it.

We can't see why truth may not compromise matters with us, leaving the most comely of our idols, and winking at our least culpable peccadilloes. And, because the stern, indomitable principle *won't* yield, or accommodate our caprices in any manner, we go into a passion, call its minister our *enemy*, and bid him be gone,—little knowing what a suicidal piece of madness we are obeying.

To illustrate this, I related the story of SIR BRASIL AND HIS FALCON.

Sir Brasil, wearied with the toil of the chase, and parched with extreme thirst, “leashed his favorite falcon to his wrist, and, girding on his sword, straight took his way along the silent groves,” in search of some refreshing spring.

There was no water

In all the summer woods. The insatiate sun
Had drunk all up, and sapped each secret spring,
Save the round beads of dew, that nestling dwelt
Deep in the bosom of the fox-glove's bells.
There was no water. Beds of vanished streams
Mocked him with memories of lucid waves,
That rose and fell before his fancy's eye
In glassy splendor. As the soothing wind
Stole softly o'er the leaves, it gave low tones,
That sounded, in Sir Brasil's sharpened ear,
Like distant rippings of a pleasant stream ;
But there was none.

Sir Brasil pursued his wearisome search; “his brow was hot, his tongue beat dry against his teeth.” In a word, he was ready to expire of thirst.

At length, after incredible perseverance, he reached the dry and sandy bed of a vanished stream. The disappointment is cruel enough; and the poor knight is just resigning himself to despair, when he discovers, trickling "from out the crevice of a rock," a few "sluggish drops of dark-green water." Hope revives in Sir Brasil's breast. He releases the falcon from his wrist, and, "stopping the jewelled mouth-piece of his golden bugle with a plug of moss," converts it into a cup to catch the drops of water as they fall. "With toil and pain, he gathers each slow drop," until "the dear draught is level with the golden rim;" then raises it eagerly to his lips.

But, at this critical instant, what does the audacious falcon do but dash, "with swift stroke of his long pinion," the precious cup to the ground! No wonder the knight frowned, and regarded his favorite with astonished anger. "Once again, Sir Brasil, with weary hand and long delay, filled up the golden measure." Again he raised it to his lips, when, wonderful to relate, the falcon again dashed it from his hand.

"Now, by the sacred cup which Christ did drink of," swore the enraged Sir Brasil, "I will wring thy neck, thou foolish bird, an' thou do that again!"

"A third time did he stoop, and, horn in hand, bend his broad back to catch the sluggish stream; a third time did he raise the bugle towards his lips; a third time, with swift wing, the falcon dashed the measure from his hand."

Then Sir Brasil's eye flashed with humid fire. His

thin-drawn lip quivered, his cheek grew pale, and, with an ungloved hand, he smote the bird full in the throat. It fluttered on his wrist, and, with panting strength, spread out its arrowy wings, convulsively, as if it would flee right sunward from black death. Its curved beak opened wide, gaping for air. Its large, round, golden eye turned on Sir Brasil, with a look of sad, reproachful love; then, with a faint gasp, it fluttered — fell — and died.

“Well a day!” said the knight, “the bird was mulish and deserved its fate; yet would I had not killed it!”

Killed it was, however, and I suppose that most people would agree with Sir Brasil, that it deserved its fate. It presumptuously interfered with the knight’s pleasure; nay, with unpardonable impudence, repeatedly snatched from him that which he considered essential to his existence.

You will say that the silly bird received but the just reward of its inexplicable behavior.

But let us attend to the *sequel* of this curious story.

Sir Brasil, finding it weary work filling his goblet with these sluggish drops, resolves to seek “the source of the thin stream. Through the forsaken beds of ancient streams, over massive boulder stones, humped with old age, and coated with gray moss,—over trunks of rotting trees, that in the night lit with pale splendor the dark path around, and slept in the light,—over sharp, volcanic soil, that crackled beneath his

tread — Sir Brasil took his way, with weary feet, and tongue that often wagged in sanctimonious oath.”

Thus passes “a full, slow hour,” and the miserable knight is fainting with thirst, “when lo! like sapphire through the smoke-clouds of a maiden’s hair, gleamed something blue. It twisted as it shone, and glanced, in the distance, like an azure spray. As speeds the Arab to the green oasis, after five days’ thirst, so Brasil sped, nerving his flagging limbs, towards the spot so distant and so dear.

“But, as he came nearer, a poisonous vapor seemed to load the air; and foul mephitic clouds, that clogged each sense, hovered oppressively about him. The poisoned air smote on his brain like an invisible sword, and clove his consciousness. He raved and reeled, and threw his arms aloft, and tried to pray; and *spoke pet words to his dead falcon*, as if it were alive. Then, suddenly, with one great effort, he seemed to regain himself, and strode onward.

“As he approached the place whence shot the sapphire gleam, a horrid sight burst on his view. Lo! coiling on a mound, lay a huge green serpent. Tier upon tier of emerald scales, that glistened into blue, swept upwards in grand spirals. His great head lay open-jawed, and hanging over the brink of a steep rock; while, slaving from his mouth, trickled, in sluggish drops, a stream of distilled poison, green and rank!

“Sir Brasil’s heart grew sick; for *now* he saw that what he had wished to drink, and what the falcon

had wasted, was the venom that slavered from the serpent on the rock, and, filtering through some secret stony way, welled out below, in green and sluggish drops of withering poison.”*

Now, who does not see, in the tragedy of the poor falcon, the TOO COMMON FATE OF THE TRUTH-SPEAKERS, in all times? They are our best *friends*, yet we treat them as *enemies*; they peril their own welfare to avert destruction from us, and we slay them for their faithfulness!

When, thirsting for some pleasure, we raise the dear goblet to our lips, and they, directed by a holy instinct, courageously dash it from our hand, we do not pause to inquire whether the draught be *poison*, or wait until we shall have traced it to its source, but precipitate our mad wrath upon our preservers, and learn at last how foully we have responded to the love they bore us!

* * * * *

As I approached the conclusion of the discourse, it became evident that its keen truths were taking effect in the hearts of some of my auditors. While most of the people sat motionless,—their undivided attention fixed upon the preacher, and expressions of surprise, conviction and approbation, playing upon their eager faces,

* This most instructive legend is recited in a splendid poem, by Fitz-James O'Brien, published in the *United States Review* for September, 1853. In the text I have used the poem quite remorselessly — transposing a number of the lines to suit the demands of my prose version.

— there were a few who began to shift their attitudes, with a perplexed and apprehensive air, and with an occasional shrug and grimace, denoting something like sudden pain or alarm. Wounded, they evidently were, in view of a certain sensitive shrinking from fresh sentences, which became more and more obvious in the furtive glances they cast in the direction of the battery, that was thus demolishing their breast-work of complacent piety.

My discourse was written, but the growing excitement of the occasion carried me beyond my manuscript. Pungent sentences — such as I could never have premeditated in the retirement of my study, without trembling for the consequences of uttering them — were framed in the fervor of the moment, and launched, glowing with the fire of impassioned zeal, into the midst of the astonished audience.

I believe that I must have been rendered desperate by the consciousness of my temerity, for I did not retain any distinct remembrance of what I said during this impassioned assault, but only know that I had a sense of authority and freedom that made me indifferent to considerations of favor, or fears of censure.

Two faces were prominently displayed before me, during this exciting scene. They were those of Mr. Arlington and his daughter.

The calm and majestic air which usually marked that gentleman, was exchanged for one of mingled astonishment and incredulity. He was evidently saved from blank amazement by partially doubting the

report of his senses. He gazed, listened, ruminated, marvelled, and consulted the countenances of other hearers. Once, for an instant, his glance rested on the vacant pew of Mr. Fiscal, from which it recurred to the preacher, and settled into a steadfast gaze of penetrating inquiry.

As for Miss Arlington, she surprised me by divesting herself of her usual abstraction, and listening with evident interest.

Hitherto, I had rarely met her glance during the delivery of a sermon, nor had she given me reason to believe, except on one occasion, that she felt the least concern in the realities of religion. Indeed, I had feared, judging from the little that my acquaintance with her had disclosed, that she was strongly inclined to scepticism, and inwardly felt that all faith was a pious sham.

On this occasion, however, her demeanor was altogether different. Ere I was aware of having interested her, she was looking me keenly in the face, her form bent forward, her lips parted, and a flush of animating sensation tinging her cheeks. Surprise, approval and anxiety, were obvious in her attitude and look.

The sermon was over; and, while the anthem was being performed, I looked at my watch, and found that I had exceeded my usual time by thirty-five minutes. Considerable bustle was apparent in some of the pews, and the leading brethren telegraphed their "impressions" to each other. I saw Miss

Arlington scanning her father's serious face, while he looked anxiously towards Mr. Gleason and Mr. Wilkins.

'The congregation being dismissed, Mr. Arlington waited for me in the porch, where I was greeted with his usual benignity, and invited to join his family at tea, that evening; a proposition which I accepted with some natural forebodings.

XII.

POLICY AND PRINCIPLE.

ON my way to Mr. Arlington's, that afternoon, I suddenly found myself in the midst of a crowd of men, so numerous as to entirely block up the street. At the same time, I recognized the tones of a voice, and the outline of a figure, which I had good reason to remember.

The crowd, indeed, was assembled in honor of my acquaintance, Mr. Peppery; who, from the elevation of an oil-cask, and with commendable vigor, was denouncing the institution of slavery, and upbraiding its northern accomplices and apologists.

His arguments were rather impressive, when he condescended to argue; but his *invective* was his pet delight, and he hurled it upon his auditors with considerable effect. There seemed a division of opinion among them, however; for some applauded the orator with the enthusiasm of sympathy, and others angrily contradicted him with the asperity of prejudice. But contradiction was the fuel with which the fierce little man fed his philanthropic indignation; and those who provoked him usually received a shot in return that

tingled in their blood, and inspired an exulting peal from the opposite party.

I elbowed my way through the crowd as fast as convenient, not caring to be recognized by the vehement reformer, and half fearing that he might distinguish me by a personal allusion.

But, whether seen or not, I had not gone beyond the sound of his voice, before a volley of condemnation was opened against the church; and I had the pleasure of hearing those charges preferred against the clergy with which all readers of Garrisonian literature are familiar. I was not sufficiently flattered to incline me to linger.

During tea, Mr. Arlington spoke pleasantly on various topics, but made no reference to the sermon. His wife looked slightly troubled, I thought; but Miss Arlington's face beamed with unwonted animation.

After we had left the table, and were all seated in the parlor, Mr. Arlington began to speak of a lecture we had heard, during the past week, before the lyceum, when, suddenly diverging, as if by accident, he carelessly observed:

"By the way, Brother Chester, your sermon, this afternoon, was rather *unique*, was it not? a little out of the common course."

This was accompanied by a very penetrating glance.

I answered that it was a discourse in which I felt more than ordinary concern. He smiled, benignly, as he rejoined:

"It was an extraordinary sermon, in several respects. I saw that it attracted uncommon attention. I have no doubt it will be talked of a great deal. In fact, Brother Chester, we have had but very few of such sermons preached in our church."

"I presume not," answered I, chilled by the sense of something *ominous* in this indirect method of address.

"That legend of Sir Brasil was managed with fine effect," continued Mr. Arlington. "I had read the story myself, but never thought, I confess, what a trenchant lesson it contains. I wonder your predecessor, Brother Stringent, never saw its significance."

It was impossible not to see this covert thrust, but I resolved not to be too forward in apprehending the allusion.

I replied, simply, by saying that the lesson of the story was obvious enough, I should suppose, to have attracted the notice of a man less acute than Brother Stringent seemed to have been.

A just perceptible compression of the lips showed that Mr. Arlington suspected I might have intended a retort; but he presently resumed, with the same sunny countenance that usually beamed upon the world:

"It occurred to me, while listening to your peroration, that the strong language you employed might lead strangers to suppose you intended some PERSONAL APPLICATION of the discourse. No doubt the excitability of your temperament may account for the

terms you saw fit to use ; but is it not probable that there may have been persons present, who, not having the pleasure of your acquaintance, would give to your language its obvious meaning, and fairly conclude that you meant to arraign the parish for misdemeanors ? ”

“ It is not unlikely, I think, that such an inference may have been drawn,” I answered, with as much composure as the case would allow.

“ I should be sorry to hear that any of the brethren were hurt,” pursued Mr. Arlington ; “ for we seem to be enjoying a very happy and harmonious state of things, just now ; and a few months more of continued prosperity would efface the remembrance of those discords, which Brother Stringent so unwisely promoted.”

“ It is always to be deplored that anything should occur to disturb the peace of a Christian parish,” I replied ; “ and I am resolved to do all I can to promote that union, and that love among the brethren, which is consistent with the faithful administration of the truth.”

After a moment’s reflection, my parishioner observed :

“ You will be willing to make some allowance, I presume, for the sensitiveness of our people, in view of the provocations they suffered from your predecessor. Indeed, his excessive severity, in the application of his principles, so aggravated the feelings of the brethren, that I fear they will not endure a too direct reference to their failings. It will be necessary to

treat their errors *gently*, for the present, lest they contract some unhappy prejudice against you, to the premature loss of your influence."

"That is," said Miss Arlington, looking up from a book which she had been reading, and regarding her father with a kindling look, "you would advise the falcon not to dash the goblet from the knight's hand, until he had drank half its poisoned contents! This delaying the stroke might abate the knight's *anger*, perhaps, so long as he thought the cup INNOCENT; but, when he should begin to realize the fate into which his blind appetite had led him, would he not execrate the culpable timidity of the bird for having hesitated to warn him?"

And, having spoken thus, the young lady's glance met mine, for an instant, with an expression I well understood.

"You argue very plausibly, my daughter," returned Mr. Arlington, evidently disconcerted by her speech, "and I find you are disposed to do full justice to Brother Chester's legend;" this in a tone slightly sarcastic, as it seemed to me; "but we must remember that many a beautiful theory proves itself impracticable when we attempt to realize it."

"Is the impracticability necessarily in the *theory*?" inquired his daughter.

"It is not advisable to argue that point, at present," he returned, with the slightest possible appearance of being vexed; "but let me remind you, Louisa, of a single fact, which proves the inutility of a

rigid application of the Gospel to the faults of men, as we find them in these times."

I listened, in absolute alarm, for the evidence which was to show that human wilfulness had, at last, got the upper hand in the management of this universe, insomuch that God's ministers were soberly advised to compromise matters with the spirit of evil.

"You remember," continued Mr. Arlington, addressing his daughter, "that while Brother Stringent was rending our parish by urging his reform doctrines, Mr. Downy was filling up the Plush-street Church by a course of lectures on the Depravity and Doom of Babylon. Never were heard in Bubbleton such popular discourses. Everybody praised them. Even those whom nobody suspected of having any interest in religion commended them in the highest terms. Mr. Downy was complimented in various ways. Old Mr. Sharkey, who, as you will remember, was suspected of smuggling, and who is popularly supposed to be quite destitute of devout feelings, presented the preacher with a superb set of silver. And Jacob Bonus, hard as he is said to use his tenants, presented the pastor's wife with a splendid cloak and set of furs. Moreover, the parish grew so compact and popular, that the income of the Plush-street Church was enlarged the value of five hundred dollars. Thus, while our minister run himself out, and brought his parish into reproach, Mr. Downy, by his superior discretion and knowledge of his people's wants, run a successful and honorable career, and extended his in-

fluence even to those not commonly reckoned Christians."

Miss Arlington's face had been bent over her book, during this statement. At its conclusion, she raised it for an instant, exhibiting a look of most indignant scorn, and then, as if unwilling to trust her voice, bowed her head over the page in silence.

"Yet I am told," pursued Mr. Arlington, "that Mr. Downy's discourses were calculated to exert a powerful influence against sin, in all its forms. He is said to have denounced the wickedness of the Babylonians in terms really terrific; and *their* wickedness, as everybody knows, *includes* all that is known at the present day; so that, in point of fact, he denounced the sins of his own people, while assuming only to aim at those of the ancients. Young Cyrus Thistleblow says that the impassioned manner with which the preacher exposed and execrated the abominations of Babylon, reminded him of Macready, in his most powerful passages: and he gives it as his opinion, that young men of fashion enjoy a lecture at the Plush-street Church nearly as well as they do a tragedy at the Federal-street Theatre. The comparison shows that they must regard the lecture as a very solemn thing, notwithstanding it does not drive them from the church, provoked and indignant at the rudeness of the preacher. But you seem uncommonly thoughtful, Louisa; and you, also, Brother Chester."

"I was endeavoring to calculate," said Miss Arlington, "how many centuries must elapse after the

destruction of Bubbleton, before its sins would become a proper subject of pulpit censure ! ”

As for myself, I thought it best not to reveal the subject of my thought, lest it might be deemed *rude*. Such a revelation of opinion, moreover, was not to be heard every day, and I did not like to interrupt it by an expression of disapproval that I saw would be fruitless, in a case of such hardened and perverse worldliness.

Mr. Arlington saw the *wit* of his daughter's observation, and was proud enough of that to pardon the shock it gave his naked sophistry. He continued, therefore, with incredible serenity :

“ You see, then, how strongly a man may denounce sin, if he will but consult prudence, and the natural feelings of his hearers. Thus, Brother Chester, you might give us a few discourses on the crimes of the Antediluvians, or the apostasy of the Jews, or the vices and scepticism of the Athenians, or the abominations of Corinth and Rome, and incidentally denounce all the transgressions forbidden in the Decalogue, which, as you will admit, would be most thorough moral preaching. I have little doubt that a course of lectures on some such topic would prove immensely popular, as they would gratify a certain historical taste and antiquarian curiosity natural to a cultivated people.”

“ And, better still,” suggested Miss Arlington, “ they would gratify a certain love of *scandal*, which

is natural, I am afraid, to a large proportion of our respectable inhabitants ! ”

Then, without waiting for a rejoinder, the daring girl went on :

“ I have been reading a little in Christian biography, lately, father, and I am surprised to find how different a course all the eminent Christian preachers have pursued from that which you recommend. They seem to have been brave, unyielding, faithful men, to whom the favor of those they addressed was the last thing they considered. Indeed, their noble characters seem to have been *formed*, in a great degree, by the hardships and sufferings to which the loss of human favor subjected them. To me, they seem to have acted a sublimely *consistent* part. For, if religion be anything more than a fashion, it must be the first and highest of things. Its ministers are the ACTUAL REPRESENTATIVES OF GOD, whose will is holy and unchangeable ; and how can they yield to the caprices of any people, without becoming recreants to their Master ? For my part, if I had the faith to which so many people in Bubbleton lay claim, I would rather be in Mr. Stringent’s place, among enemies nobly acquired, than in Mr. Downy’s, among friends bought at the price of conscience ! ”

This spirited speech confounded Mr. Arlington as much as it astonished and gratified me. The girl looked worthy of gracing martyrdom, with her strong words and flashing glance ; and I instantly felt an ac-

cession of strength, in the consciousness of having secured so able a defender of the course I meditated.

“So you have been reading Christian biography?” said Mr. Arlington, speaking with deliberate slowness, and regarding his daughter with unequivocal amazement. “I was not aware that your taste inclined in that direction; but I must confess that your researches in martyrology have imparted to your manners something of that disdainful independence you profess to admire so much! Pray, what self-devoted man have you been reading about last, whose spirit you have caught thus faithfully?”

“A very unlovely man, indeed, judged from your point of view,” she answered; “it is the blunt Scotch Protestant, John Knox. Would you like to hear a remark or two concerning him?”

Mr. Arlington *signified* a willingness, which I fear he was far from feeling; and his daughter read from the memoir the following pertinent passages, in reference to Knox’s preaching before King Edward’s court:

“His duty as a preacher he supposed to consist not in delivering homilies against sin in general, but in speaking to this man and to that man, to kings and queens, and dukes and earls, of their own sinful acts as they sat below him; and they all quailed before him. We hear much of his power in the pulpit, and this was the secret of it. Never, we suppose, before or since, have the ears of great men grown so hot upon them, or such words been heard in the courts of

princes. . . . If we wish to find the best account of Edward's ministers, we must go to the surviving fragments of Knox's sermons for it, which were preached in their presence.

“ ‘ I am greatly afraid (he said once), that Ahitophel is counsellor, and Shebnah is scribe, controller and treasurer.— And Ahitophel and Shebnah were both listening to his judgment of them : the first, in the person of the then omnipotent Duke of Northumberland ; and the second, in that of Lord Treasurer Paulet, Marquis of Winchester.

“ ‘ The force which must have been in him to have carried such a practice through,— he, a poor, homeless, friendless exile, without stay or strength but what was in his own heart,— must have been enormous. Nor is it less remarkable that the men whom he so roughly handled were forced to bear with him. Indeed, they more than *bore* with him, for the Duke of Northumberland proposed to make him Bishop of Rochester, and had an interview with him on the subject, which, however, led to no conclusion ; the duke having to complain “ that he found Mr. Knox neither grateful nor pleaseable,” the meaning of which was, that Knox, knowing that he was a bad, hollow-hearted man, had very uncourteously told him so ! ’ ”

“ I hope,” said Mr. Arlington, breaking in at this place,— his habitual politeness hardly concealing his disgust,— “ I hope you would not propose *such* a man for the imitation of any minister in Bubbleton. Pray, do you find any more admirable thing in the man

than this rude independence and his trenchant personalities?"

"Yes," answered the girl, promptly; "*the estimate he forms of his own faithfulness* appears to me to be better still. After daring the anger of the powerful duke, and that of other gentlemen of the court, he still judges himself to have been little less than a coward. Please to hear, sir, what he says of himself, in this particular:

" 'This day my conscience accuseth me that I spoke not so plainly as my duty was to have done; for I ought to have said to the wicked man, expressly by his name, *thou shalt die the death*; for I find Jeremiah the prophet to have done so, and not only he, but Elijah, Elisha, Micah, Amos, Daniel, Jesus Christ himself. I accuse none but myself; the love that I did bear to this my wretched carcase, was the chief cause that I was not faithful or fervent enough in that behalf. I had no will to provoke the hatred of men.' "

Before any comment could be made on this subject, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a visitor. Under a variety of emotions, I saw that it was none other than Robert Fiscal.

XIII.

MR. FISCAL'S WRONGS.

THIS unexpected meeting was the occasion of great embarrassment to Mr. Fiscal, and of great pain to myself; for I instantly anticipated a very considerable addition to the previous excitement of the day and evening. The gentleman — recovering with an effort from the unpleasant surprise which my presence occasioned — bowed, with a kind of buckram politeness, from afar, but did not belie the sincerity of his dislike by offering me his hand.

In truth, he took very little pains to conceal the fact that a collision had taken place between us; that he was laboring under a sense of enormous injury, and that he no longer considered me that paragon of a minister, which, in his late enthusiasm and premature friendship, he had believed me to be.

I wish to forestall, in this place, any unfavorable judgment my readers may be liable to form of my real disposition towards this man, and towards other personages in this little history, on account of a certain playfulness of style with which I occasionally allude to them. I would fain trust that there is nothing of bitterness or resentment, or other unworthy

feeling, flowing from my pen, or lingering in my heart, as I recall these early scenes of a troubled ministry; and if any character appear in these records, in a light more ludicrous than estimable, or more repelling than attractive, it is only because — portraying them from actual life — I think I ought to present them to others precisely as they presented themselves to me.

The appearance of Mr. Fiscal, and his distant air and constrained behavior, reminded Mr. Arlington of the remarkable circumstance of his absence from church, and also suggested to his mind the obvious explanation of that circumstance. The pause that followed the reception of the visitor, whose discontented brow cast a shadow quite across the parlor, was embarrassing enough to challenge the resources of even a cultivated man, like Mr. Arlington; and that gentleman was really at a loss how to proceed in the provoking emergency. An unusual thoughtfulness marked his benign countenance.

In fact, it had been a trying day to him, as any one may see by recalling to mind what he had endured. In the morning, the sight of that VACANT PEW had, for some reason, raised a sensation more painful than surprise. In the afternoon, the tone of the preaching had become alarming; all the sentences in the sermon were shaded with evil omens, and the performance had ended with a peroration full of defiant zeal, which, in a young man, especially, was a thing to be gravely judged. Then the mild disapproval.

which he had deemed it his duty to express, and the soft counsel he had smilingly administered — in consideration of the preacher's inexperience, and the weighty precedent of the Plush-street policy — were attended by no satisfactory results. On the contrary, the contagious mischief had infected his own household, and he had been doomed to hear from the lips of his own daughter, sentiments nearly as radical and disorganizing as those with which Mr. Stringent had provoked his enmity. And now, to cap the climax of the perversity by which he was annoyed, Mr. Fiscal and I must meet, face to face, in his presence, in a manner that realized, at once, the distressing consequences he had inwardly foreboded.

Politeness is sometimes a great hindrance to progress. It proved so in Mr. Arlington's case. Had he been a blunt, plain-dealing man, he might have said what he thought of me, what he required of his daughter, and what he hoped of his brother churchman, and so have delivered his mind in an instant. But, reined in by so many checks of courtesy, it was difficult making headway at all, and even the first step was attended by fearful risks to the thin and polished elegance of his deportment.

It is not necessary that I should relate in detail what passed between us, after the Rubicon of hesitation had been actually crossed. How Mr. Fiscal indicated his sense of the injury I had done him by brief ejaculations, darted through a cloud of brooding ill-nature, — how Mr. Arlington interposed his sooth-

ing presence as mediator, palliating the offence by the most ingenious suppositions, and trying to cool the resentful temper of his friend by the most artful appeals to his several weaknesses,—how I put the convictions I uttered in the most conciliatory dress consistent with my sense of duty, and still felt them to be offensive to those I addressed,—how Miss Arlington bent her flushed face over the memoir of John Knox, only raising her head, at intervals, for a quick glance of her expressive eyes at one whose observation had particularly interested her — I need not linger to describe at greater length. It was a miserable, and very unprofitable, conversation,—eliciting only a more intimate knowledge of two characters with which I was already but too familiar.

“Forget the circumstance, Brother Fiscal, and come to church as before. Your example of punctuality and liberality would be a great loss to us. We can’t spare such a man, really. I trust that Brother Chester will not feel it to be his duty to renew the unpleasant occasion of your differences. I dare say everything will be arranged harmoniously hereafter.”

Such, in substance, was Mr. Arlington’s exhortation — repeated many times in the course of that interview.

Mr. Fiscal’s uniform answer was, “I fear Mr. Chester’s views and mine will never harmonize. He persists in holding an exaggerated idea of my business; and it isn’t pleasant having a minister who

ranks you with all sorts of low fellows and bloody-minded scoundrels, who sell their souls for money. No ; I begin to think I had better try it a while at the Reverend Mr. Downy's church."

To this I replied, that I regretted having so deeply wounded the brother's feelings, by what I regarded as only the faithful discharge of my duty ; but that, while I really desired to retain Mr. Fiscal in the society, and was truly grateful for the kindness he had formerly shown me, I could not encourage the hope that I should yield a grain of principle to retain the favor of any man in the parish.

Mr. Arlington's placid face drooped into a sad revery.

"It's a spirit that many of our ministers seem to have imbibed," said Mr. Fiscal, "and it's going to give us a great deal of trouble. They are rending their parishes, everywhere, by mixing themselves with these reforms. What it's all coming to, I'm sure I don't know ; but I'm positive that there are *some* men that won't stand it."

Mr. Arlington sighed from the depth of his revery.

"As regards *your* parish," resumed Mr. Fiscal, after a reflective pause, and appearing to direct his allusion to some very remote affair, "there is one man in this neighborhood who exerts a mischievous influence over its pastors — I'm certain he does — it can't be otherwise."

"You mean," observed Mr. Arlington, looking up from his revery —

“I mean Oracular Blunt.”

“A man of very preposterous views and very offensive manners.”

“He is a clerical bear, if there ever was one,” returned Mr. Fiscal, “and he delights to see your parish up in arms,—he enjoys it. The man envies you the harmony that has lately prevailed, and has left no means untried to destroy it, I dare say.”

These words, and the significant glance with which they were accompanied, led me to repel the implied charge of having been influenced by Mr. Blunt in the course I had pursued, and to justify my eccentric friend in the general views he held concerning the ministerial office. But Mr. Fiscal pursued his complaint :

“The rudeness of the man,” said he, “passes one’s endurance. It was only last week that I chanced to meet him in the Athenæum. No one being by, he asked me how we were prospering. I told him, very well, and, in order to prove it, entered into particulars a little. He heard me, with a scowling sort of a smile, and when I had finished, he said : ‘That ’s the way to serve Almighty God, and promote the Gospel, Brother Fiscal. Only make your minister think that his highest duty is to please the distinguished saints, whom your penny-trumpets have summoned within your gates, and it ’s an excellent beginning in the growth of grace ! After all, the Christian life is not so tough an affair as we used to suppose,—especially in cities. The most we have to do is to build stately

churches,—buy the conscience of some clever preacher, bolstering up his tottering manhood with downy pillows, after the Plush-street fashion, and ringing gold in his ears if *another* master speaks too loud,—consolidate a blessed communion of hollow proprieties, got up at enterprising shops, learned of dancing-masters, or imported out of the purity of Paris,—learn to call this heterogeneous hitching together of nameless stupidities a RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP, a SPIRITUAL UNION,—and have all this upholstery *preached* to, with becoming gravity, as though it were an assemblage of human souls! That, I think, comprises nearly everything we have to do in the way of serving God, in these happy, labor-saving days!’ And, having rattled off this impertinent nonsense,” concluded Mr. Fiscal, “he struck his cane heavily upon the floor, and, with a bundle of books under his arm, marched off like a grenadier.”

This reminiscence affected me rather more pleasantly than it did Mr. Fiscal, and I saw that Miss Arlington enjoyed it keenly. As the conversation was now diverted from the main source of Mr. Fiscal’s grievance, and as it had become quite late, and as, moreover, no good was likely to come by protracting the interview, I took my leave, and went home to a sleepless pillow.

XIV.

ORACULAR BLUNT AT HOME.

THE next morning, feeling the need of advice, and my mind inclining to despondency, I thought I would ride over to D——, and return Brother Oracular Blunt's friendly call. At the dépôt, while waiting for the train, I observed Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Gleason, and Mr. Fiscal, in earnest conversation. From the excited manner of the latter gentleman, I straightway concluded that I must be the subject of the animated conference; and the surmise was confirmed presently, by a certain air of constraint and coolness with which they all recognized me.

When the train came up, Mr. Gleason stepped into the car immediately behind me, but finding an old acquaintance, as it seemed, in the person of a large factory owner, he confined his company to him, without giving me so much as a glance.

Thus I rode, silent and contemplative, until the conductor, crying with an intonation quite peculiar to that class of intelligence officers, as though his voice were a part of the wind, announced "D—— Centre," and there I got out.

Mr. Oracular Blunt's dwelling being pointed out to me, I found it to be a curious little Gothic house, with a strange number of steep gables, perched on the top of a hill. Its front was approached by a long flight of steps, and a garden of some pretensions was partly visible in the rear.

A plump, rosy-cheeked little girl, with a very fat baby on her shoulder, admitted me into the minister's house, and, taking me to the top of the giddy perch, showed me to my eccentric friend, as he sat in one of the snuggest and airiest of studies imaginable. He received me with a straightforward cordiality and unpretending pleasure, at once very becoming to him and gratifying to myself.

After we had conversed a few minutes, he remarked — laying his hand upon a small and antiquated looking volume :

“ I have been reading, for the third time, old John Berridge's caustic little book — ‘ THE CHRISTIAN WORLD UNMASKED. ’ I have been in the habit of taking it, in small doses, for years, whenever I feel myself growing epicurean. — It's a capital antidote for that complaint, I assure you. Not altogether a pure medicine, I grant ; for Berridge lived more than forty years ago, you know, and was associated with that renowned communion of quacks, the doctors of the Church of England. He teaches many things in his book which Christians are now beginning to reject as heathenish ; but the moral earnestness of the book, and its critical analysis of all the shams and subter-

fuges wherein we try to shelter ourselves from the pursuit of duty, are masterly and perennial. Every word has a most felicitous fitness; every sentence, like the claymore of the mighty Scot, mows down a host of enemies; and every truth pressed home to the shrinking heart, contrives to burrow there, and won't move out. But very likely you have read the book, yourself, Brother Chester."

I acknowledged that I had not, and that I knew but very little of its author, beyond the fact of his having been an eccentric, but very sincere and efficient, preacher, in some of the rural districts of England. Mr. Blunt took up the volume, with an air of delightful, almost tender, interest.

"A single anecdote," said he, "told in John Berridge's own words, will give you a picture of the man. Shall I read it?"

I of course begged that he would. So, running his eye down the smoky page, Mr. Blunt read, with lively satisfaction, the following fragment of autobiography:

"'Soon after I began to preach the Gospel at Everton — says Mr. Berridge — the churches in the neighborhood were deserted, and mine so overcrowded that the squire, who "did not like strangers, and hated to be incommoded," joined with the offended parsons, and soon after, a complaint having been made against me, I was summoned before the bishop.'

"Think of that, now!" cried Mr. Oracular Blunt, suddenly interrupting his own reading; "here is one

live man, among some scores of transcendently wooden fellows, who has the will and knack to preach the Gospel so as to be intelligible and interesting. And here are some hundreds of famishing souls, grown very lean upon their hard fare (the academical sort of preaching which the wooden gentlemen deal in), scampering away from these miserable stalls to hear John Berridge, whose words are spirit and life. Now, natural as all this seems, it proves to be an offence. There is the high and mighty *squire*—a broad-shouldered, apoplectic, surly fellow, I dare say—whose gouty feet are not to be encroached upon by strangers, even though they are striving to save their souls! Then, there are the wooden ministers in their empty churches, who are unspeakably resentful because their people have gone to look up the key of salvation, instead of listening to their academical twang.—Well, as we have seen, the upshot of the matter is, the live man goes before the bishop.”

And having thus ended his indignant commentary, at which I could not help laughing a little, Mr. Blunt resumed his reading :

“ “ Well, Berridge,” said his lordship, “ did I institute you to Eaton or Patton? Why do you go preaching out of your own parish ? ”

“ “ My lord,” said I, “ I make no claim to the livings of those parishes. ’Tis true, I was once at Eaton, and, finding a few poor people assembled, I admonished them to repent of their sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their

souls. At that very moment, my lord, there were five or six clergymen *out of their own parishes*, and enjoying themselves on the Eaton bowling-green."

" " "I tell you," retorted his lordship, "that if you continue preaching where you have no right, you will very likely be sent to Huntington jail."

" " "I have no more regard, my lord, for a jail than other folks," rejoined I; "but I had rather go *there* with a good conscience, than be at liberty without one."

" " "His lordship looked very hard at me. "Poor fellow!" said he, "you are beside yourself, and in a few months you will either be better or worse." "Then, my lord," said I, "you may make yourself quite happy in this business; for, if I should be better, you suppose I shall desist of my own accord; and if worse, you need not send me to Huntington jail, for I shall be better accommodated in Bedlam."

" " "His lordship then pathetically entreated me, as one who had been and wished to continue my friend, not to embitter the remaining portion of his days by any squabbles with my brother clergymen, but to go home to my parish, and so long as I kept within it I should be at liberty to do what I liked there.

" " "As to your conscience," said his lordship, "you know that preaching out of your parish is contrary to the canons of the church."

" " "There is one canon, my lord," said I, "which I dare not disobey, and that says, Go preach the Gospel to every creature." " " "

XV.

ORACULAR BLUNT'S VIEWS OF BUBBLETON.

“THAT was the right sort of a man,” cried Mr. Oracular Blunt, exultingly, as he finished the anecdote and laid down the book,—“the right sort of a man to confront broad-shouldered squires, and wooden-headed clergymen, and epicurean bishops, and other eminent representatives of the English church establishment. As every great and sincere man may, he sustained himself victoriously,—Lord Chatham, himself, coming from the helm of the nation to shield him from the wooden-headed league, and a *greater Lord* than he dwelling with him, invisible.

“Sometimes,” continued Mr. Oracular Blunt, growing more and more earnest, “when I take account of the stock of worldliness to be found in some of our parishes — suppose I say in *all* of them,—I find myself praying for some such an incarnation among *us* — for somebody who dares to take our pride by the horns, to pull the nose of our self-conceit, and, in a general way, to wake up our drowsy spirits to some little consciousness of the Almighty Presence

that is about us, and of the immortal destiny that lies beyond us ! ”

Delivering his mind thus, in a manner as interesting as it was vehement, Mr. Oracular Blunt suddenly changed the subject, and said he would like to know how the missionaries in Burmah and Bubbleton got along with their labors.

“ I can’t answer for Burmah,” returned I, laughing at the dubious association, “ but I fear the missionaries in Bubbleton are not doing much.”

“ A pretty, obstinate state of heathenism there, I suppose ? ”

“ Quite so, as it appears to me.”

“ A pretty strong attachment to idolatry, I dare say ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Ah, I don’t know but Mr. Judson has the best field, after all. I doubt if there be as much spiritual lunacy in all India as in this compact little commonwealth ! Did it never strike you, as perfectly amazing, with how much more deference the Eastern heathens treat their gods than those of Massachusetts do their nominal divinity ? Truly, we have need that the other race of idolaters take compassion on us, and come and teach us devotion and self-denial ! I’m very glad the Burmans don’t know how destitute we are of these qualities, or they might turn the tables upon us, some day, after a very humiliating fashion ! Has the persecution begun again at your station ? By my soul, I should judge by your looks that it had ; for

you are two years older, at least, than when I saw you first."

I told him what had transpired since his visit — what seemed to be the tendency of things, — what I had thought and what I purposed, — and then requested his advice.

My recital did not apparently surprise him; but he considered it very deliberately, and with the utmost seriousness, and then told me what course he thought it best for me to pursue.

"You have now, I should suppose," he remarked, "given the parish to understand what you think of your mutual responsibilities. You have spoken to them plainly on this point. This is sufficient for the present. The people are all more or less surprised, and some of them are irritated. I would recommend you to be gentle, though firm, with them. I would not press the irritating point just now, for that would only aggravate the antagonism between you. Leave what you have said to act upon their hearts, under the mildest influences you can cast upon them. It is sunshine, not hail-storms nor lightnings, that vitalizes things, — though the ruder elements have their functions too. After the storm, then give them the mild shining of the sun. Perhaps some of the truths you have spoken may be quickened in their hearts. At all events, you will have convinced them, if their lunacy be not utterly incurable, that you do not deal in hail and lightning out of love of those things, but for an *ulterior end* that cannot be reached by other means."

Mr. Oracular Blunt said much more, that I felt to be equally wise, and for which I was equally grateful.

As we sat counselling thus, the same plump little girl, with the same fat little baby on her shoulder, came up and informed us that dinner was ready. So we put Burmah and Bubbleton off our minds, and, Mr. Blunt setting the baby on *his* shoulder, like a plaster-paris image, we all went below. I found Mrs. Blunt to be a hearty, rosy, good-looking lady, cordial and easy in her manners, and considerably younger than her husband. The two children I have mentioned comprised all the family, and it seemed to be a very pleasant one.

During the meal, Mr. Blunt dilated, in his picturesque phraseology, on the advantages of his lofty perch, pointing triumphantly to Mrs. B. and the children, as demonstrations of the salubrity of the spot.

Altogether, it proved a very exhilarating visit, and I returned to Bubbleton in the evening, strengthened for the unknown experiences that lay before me.

XVI.

A TRAGEDY OF INTEMPERANCE.

AFTER the incidents last described, I passed several days in a kind of suspense not unlike that which an innocent man experiences, when on trial for his life, during the period which elapses between the charge of the judge and the agreement of the jury. I felt that the worldly-wise men of Bubbleton were making up their verdict, and that the sword that would cut my pastoral existence asunder was suspended by a single hair.

Never, probably, did a minister hold his charge by a more precarious tenure. I knew the sensitiveness of the parish — I knew its fastidious tastes, and its admirable proficiency in the ecclesiastical science of nonconformity. I knew it hesitated no more in sacrificing a minister to its caprices, than does a Baltimore Convention in immolating a demagogue at the shrine of Availability.

As yet, no committee had appeared to expostulate with me upon my rashness, nor had I received any threat of expulsion from any quarter; but there was

evidently a sensation in the parish of which I was the occasion, and which promised little peace or security for the future. Under these circumstances, I composed my mind as well as I could for study, and wrote a sermon from the text — “With patience possess ye your souls.”

The next Sunday, the congregations were unusually large, and it appeared — from a certain tip-toe look of expectation in the people — that a motive not strictly devotional had assembled them in such liberal numbers. To my surprise, I noticed Mr. Peppery among them in the afternoon, and, unless my perception deceived me, the little reformer regarded me throughout the discourse with a look of heartfelt sympathy. I am confirmed in this impression by what followed, for, at the close of the service, he waited for me in the aisle, and, giving my hand a cordial gripe, said, in a thrilling, waspish whisper — “So persecuted they the Prophets. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” — Then, hurrying out of the church, as if pursued by “the overflowing scourge,” the fiery little man disappeared in the crowd; and such was the effect of his solemn words and tragic air, that I felt myself, at the time, almost a martyr.

As for Mr. Fiscal, I heard of him that day as being at the Plush-street Church; though, as it subsequently appeared, he did not then engage seats in that favored sanctuary, but only signified to the parish what course he was likely to pursue in case it should “sustain” — to borrow a phrase from the politicians — “the present administration.” This gentleman’s

attachment to the parish was such that he could not make up his mind to abandon it, without first pointing out, in very distinct and emphatic terms, the dangers it must incur under the charge of so "rash and inexperienced a pastor;" and he failed not to exert his utmost influence towards averting, by summary measures, the unhappy results he foreboded. But the various methods by which his zeal manifested itself, were not made known to me until a later period.

Those prominent members of the society—Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Gleason—did not find it convenient to wait for me, that day, in the porch of the church, as was their custom—in consequence, I suppose, of having no congratulations to express, and being occupied with considerations of no very pleasant nature.

Mr. Arlington, however, gave me his hand, with his old benign manner,—evidently grateful that the services had been finished without any belligerent demonstration on my part. He alluded to Mr. Peppery being at church in a tone of some surprise, followed by a soft, prophetic sigh, that recalled a remark he had made on a former occasion; which was to the effect, that a preacher who should please the parish would not please Mr. Peppery.

As regards Miss Arlington (I cannot help alluding to her here, in view of what followed), she seemed to have subsided into her former indifference, inasmuch that it was difficult to believe her the same per-

son whose interest had been so strongly enlisted, only the previous week. I little suspected the struggle that was transpiring in this young woman's mind, or how profound and painful had been her experience of the ills, and doubts, and aspirations, of which noble natures are susceptible, when environed by uncongenial circumstances.

I went homeward, quite weary and disheartened.

Mr. Fiscal's beautiful present remained still in the study, tantalizing me with the most miserable suggestions. As I did not wish to retain it, considering our altered relations, and as I feared that I might yet further exasperate him by returning it, I was perplexed in trying to decide what I ought to do with it.

The evening set in, cold and stormy. It was about the last of December. The wind became high, and moaned hoarsely through the streets, driving the frozen rain before it, and sweeping the nerves with an irritating sense of discomfort. There was an influence in the night, which, added to the solitude of my room, would have been depressing enough to the spirits, at any time; — in my present frame of mind it was overwhelming. I paced my narrow room with an aching head and a desponding heart. Very gloomy and forbidding was the scenery my fancy contemplated, and neither memory nor hope afforded me much relief.

Suddenly I said to myself, "This will never do. You are growing effeminate. Where is your courage? Where is your faith? Come, have done with

your cowardly despondency. Rouse your latent manhood. What would you have? What did you anticipate, when you promised to serve God against human selfishness and caprice? Did you not enlist for this war with some idea of the hardships it must involve? Out upon your murmuring! Leave that to those who profess no faith and no high resolves. You are a minister of God. Your strength and recompense come from Him. Do your duty conscientiously, cheerfully,—He is security for the RESULT.”

With reviving confidence, I sat down, and began to read the Psalms—those wonderful lyrics that have an adaptation, thousand-fold, to the wants and postures of the human soul. I needed the faith and composure which those deep utterances of experience impart, for a night of agitation and responsibility yet awaited me.

It was about ten o'clock, as nearly as I can remember, when I was startled from a reverie by a heavy knock at the door of my study.

The lateness of the hour, and the inclemency of the night, convinced me at once that it must be an urgent summons from some family in affliction; but I was scarcely prepared for the surprise I experienced, when, on opening the door, I beheld the stalwart form of the blacksmith, Harry Hanson.

He held his cap in his hand, and his uncovered brow revealed beads of sweat, that trickled down upon his ample chest, and mingled with the sleet that was melting from his clothes and hair. The excitement

of his errand shone in the working of his countenance, and in the unsteady tones of his voice.

"I want you to go with me to Bill Gorman's as quick as you can," cried he; "if you can speak any comfort to the wretched, God knows it is needed there. Perhaps you don't know who Bill Gorman is? Well, he's a miserable vagabond of a drunkard, who has wasted his living, and abused his family, this twenty years. But it's nearly over. Good Lord! what a night this has been! Are you going?"

I threw on my cloak, pressed my hat close over my brow—for the wind was driving at a high rate—took my umbrella in hand, and told him I was ready.

"Thank you," said the blacksmith, "there's not a minute to lose. I began to think there wasn't a minister in Bubbleton who would go on this business. I applied to four of them before I sought you. The Plush-street minister is nearest, but he framed more excuses than there are propositions in a Calvinistic sermon. Well, it's no pleasant service, to be sure, considering what a man Bill Gorman has been. And such a night! Your umbrella will be sucked into the clouds, in no time."

We passed out. The storm was formidable, indeed.

"Here, you hold firm to my arm," said the blacksmith, "and we shall weather the gale at last. I had a carriage out until half an hour since, when the

driver was unlucky enough to smash a wheel. However, we are making progress."

As we pursued our way through the dark, tempestuous streets, Harry Hanson informed me of the nature of the calamity, in view of which I was expected to offer religious consolation.

"This Bill Gorman," said he, "being always quarrelsome when in liquor, got into a fight this evening, and was brought home, stabbed, about an hour since! My God! what a scene it was! But we must hurry, — he can't stand it long; and it may do him some good, and be a consolation to his poor family, to have you see him before he goes. Good Lord! he is sober enough now, I promise you!"

Although I had anticipated some such tragical revelation, on account of the blacksmith's great excitement and haste, the statement shocked me to a degree that I cannot describe.

"Where did this horrible scene occur?" I asked, with suspended breath, and dreading a response that should confirm my fears.

"It was in one of those rum-dens on Brewer-street," he answered, to my great relief; though, after subsequent reflection, I saw the utter improbability of the supposition that Mr. Fiscal would so far compromise his respectability, as to open his store upon a Sunday evening. "Poor Gorman has usually frequented more respectable places," continued Harry Hanson; "but such being closed against him, of late, and the love of drink being so mighty strong in the

man, he formed the habit of visiting them abominable cellars, where the lowest drunkards have their revels; and this horrible, horrible tragedy is the upshot of the business! Lord! I'm glad my anvil an't a rum-cask, Mr. Chester!"

"Well may you be glad, my friend," said I; "cursed is the gain that comes through such a traffic. Is this the place?"

"This is the place. What but a murder would bring people out, such a night? See, the house is thronged! Hark! don't you hear them groans from *him*, and the cries and sobs of the *others* — poor wife! — poor innocent child! Lord! I can't go in — I can't stand the sight, Mr. Chester. I'm a woman, when such things are going on!"

The blacksmith said all this in a rapid undertone, as we approached the door of the wretched house, — brushing his great sleeves across his eyes, frequently, as he spoke; and revealing, in the tremulousness of his voice, the power of his emotion, and the gentleness that possessed his gigantic frame.

I do not propose to dwell upon the awful scene that awaited me, in that hapless home, so long dishonored by evil passions — so suddenly invested with a tragic interest. The chief figures in the picture stand vividly before me still, but I never contemplate them without a sensation of painful sadness.

I see the wreck of a man lying upon a miserable bed, pale and ghastly, writhing in the consciousness of an ill-spent life and of an inexorable death, and al-



GORMON'S DEATH BED.

ternately crying to God for mercy, and beseeching the dependent ones he had wronged for their forgiveness. I see the wife and child in their indescribable distress. I see an old man standing near the bed-side, holding one of the inebriate's hands, and murmuring, with many tears, a simple prayer. He calls to mind the early promise of an ambitious youth, and the happy bridal of the Providence belle; and the charity of friendship murmurs in his broken accents, when he says,—“Ah, a better, nor a kinder, man, did not live than he; poor Billy! it was drink that did it all.”

I see, in the back-ground of the picture, a mass of eager and agitated faces — now scanning the group by the bed-side — now exchanging observations in muffled whispers — and the dim lamp-light playing over all, with startling and ominous effect.

Why should I dwell upon my experience of that scene, or try to record the service I sought to render those broken and despairing hearts? Or need I say that the burden of woe that smote my ears that night, as it went up to heaven from that stricken household, has sounded in my spirit through all these years, as a sacred charge, to employ the authority of my office and all the terrors of truth, against that monster-vice of society — intemperance?

* * * * *

It was long after the midnight hour had sounded, that I turned my feet from that sad threshold, and took my homeward way through the silent streets.

The storm had passed. The stars shone over the quiet town — an eternal prophecy of peace, as then they seemed.

And I, with more faith and strength for all that I had imparted, sought the solitude of my chamber, and enjoyed the untroubled sleep that sanctifies faithful labor.

* * * * *

The next day I said to myself: “Now it is Monday, and you must beware of getting effeminate. Nothing is so good for the spirits as constant employment,—so keep yourself stirring.—If you would keep your head above all the Bubbleton freshets, you must be active, vigilant, and self-possessed. You must buffet this wave, and avoid that one, and dodge the drift-wood, and struggle with the current, and keep your course like a strong man.”

Self murmured a little, on hearing this charge, but seeing, on reflection, that there was reason in it, promised obedience.

I began the active duties of the day by sending Mr. Fiscal's present home, accompanied by an explanatory note, penned in as conciliatory a style as I could frame. Then I paid a visit to Brother Herrick — the sick man whom I have already described. Next I saw the WIDOW AND THE FATHERLESS, who stood in such painful relations to the tragedy of the preceding night.— Then I spent an hour with Silas Willet, and heard some reminiscences of the earliest days of Bubbleton. Afterwards, I dined with Miss Lark,

and the meal was graced by a splendid continuity of quotations from Moore and Shelley.

Thus, occupying myself through the day with various duties, I was enabled to keep anxiety at a distance, and look the future in the face with some assurance.

XVII.

TROUBLES.

WEEKS elapsed without bringing our affairs to a crisis, although the signs of a rupture continued as threatening as ever. A sullen discontent characterized some of the brethren, and a curious, eager alertness of observation marked the demeanor of others. It was as though part of the parish were preparing the sacrifice, while the rest were impatiently awaiting the festival of excitement that was to attend it.

Those weeks of probation, however, were not to me a dead level of monotony. They were enlivened and diversified by a succession of annoyances, trials, and mental struggles. It was with much bitterness of spirit, that I verified Mr. Oracular Blunt's observation, in reference to the facility with which Bubbleton usually *matured* its ministers.

The annoyances to which I refer began in the guise of ANONYMOUS LETTERS. It is astonishing how much innocent paper and laborious invention were squandered on this exhilarating business. And very interesting it was to observe under what varieties of bad

character I was made to appear, in these flattering epistles. Nothing short of the most ample and well-invested inheritance of original sin, could account for the prolific iniquity alleged against me by my unknown accusers. Sometimes — under the influence of the astounding information furnished by these letters — I was led into a momentary doubt of my identity; and it was not until I had indulged in a little reflection before the mirror, that I was reassured of not being somebody else! The marvel was that any man, to whom time was of any account, should lavish so much attention upon so worthless a sinner, instead of handing him over, by a familiar process, to the lawyers and turnkeys.

Another source of wonder, in connection with these letters, was, that the greatest of my misdemeanors seemed to consist, after all, in my remaining in Bubbleton. My guilt, somehow, *magnified* itself by my relation to that parish. It was intimated that my salvation must be expected, not so much by means of repentance, as by exchanging my present charge for one less fastidious in its views and requirements.

I suppose there are few people who are not susceptible of annoyance through anonymous innuendoes, — especially if they are plied with them, with a persistence that indicates settled hostility. This method of warfare is particularly aggravating to a clergyman. The peculiar purity of his office compels him to guard his reputation with a solicitude unfelt by other men. He knows that his fame is at the mercy of his people.

He feels that a breath of suspicion may sully it forever. And anonymous letters are calculated to sting his sensibilities to the quick. If the tact of their author bear any relation to his malignity, they will goad the poor minister's soul well-nigh to desperation. The vagueness of the hints and warnings thus thrust upon him, sets his foolish imagination on an exploring tour through the infinite space of possibility ; — and apprehension sees the wolf at a thousand exposed points which prudence cannot defend.

In *my* "model republic," I would have no offence recognized as *capital* but this. The anonymous assailant of reputation should find no mercy, if detected. The retributive vengeance of the law — winking from afar at other criminals — should descend upon him like the night of doom, and gird the slimy assassin with its seven-fold terrors !

Still, much as I suffered from anonymous communications, at the period of which I am writing, I do not think they would cause me much uneasiness now. A little reflection will convince any person that they are not likely to prove dangerous. If the anonymous writer really had any *truth* to allege against you, he would boldly publish it in the streets, and not skulk behind the whole crowd of mankind, to write an accusation in obscurity that he dare not support in public. — The *means* he adopts is conclusive evidence that he has no real *power* to harm you, if you only disenchant your fancy of the silly fears with which the wicked sorcerer has peopled its chambers.

Another trial that began to oppress me about this time, was of a pecuniary nature. It is true that my salary was liberal, for that day, and in view of my being an unmarried man. Six hundred dollars had a munificent sound to my ears, unaccustomed as they were to the jingle of money; and there were people in the parish who appeared to consider the sum as inexhaustible as the purse of Fortunatus, and who regarded me as a kind of humanitarian capitalist, endowed with wealth for the blessed purpose of bestowing charities upon all the poor and needy of Bubbleton.

So plausible and insinuating were the applications made to my purse, in behalf of all conceivable purposes and exertions for which money is required, and so insensibly did the restless dollars take to themselves wings, and fly wheresoever the magicians of philanthropy willed them to go, that my first quarter's salary became exhausted in less than a month after it was paid. This consummation taught me the necessity of observing economy, even with such a vast income as mine; but, having acquired some reputation for generosity, and proved myself an easy subject in the hands of experienced charity-farmers, my efforts at "retrenchment" were not as successful as I could have desired.

"Really now, Mr. Chester, I think you must give us the sanction of your support in this little affair. Your influence will help us so much! It is not a great sum we ask for — only five dollars, — and your salary is so liberal, and then you have no family to

support. Of course, you won't refuse us this little sum from your income, when so much depends upon your generous example. Besides, it is known that you gave as much to the 'Society of Consolation;' and you must be aware that the 'Sisters of Single-hearted Sensibility' have as good a claim upon you," &c. &c.

What did all my resolution avail me, in such cases? Who could withstand the artless persuasions of Magician Honeymouth? Like one controlled by a charm, I handed over the trifling contribution, and the "Sisters of Single-hearted Sensibility" were proportionally encouraged — to tease somebody else.

After Magician Honeymouth came Patrick Tatterdemalion — as voluble and resistless a scion of beggary as ever the heaving tide of emigration cast upon these afflicted shores. What heart could resist the eloquence of Patrick Tatterdemalion's vicissitudes — especially when he appealed to your benevolence as a minister of Christ, and implored blessings upon you from all the saints in the Roman Catholic calendar? It was not natural that he should go away unrewarded.

A circumstance that aggravated my pecuniary embarrassments, was the neglect of the parish in not paying my second quarter's salary when it became due. Whether this neglect was owing to the unfriendly feeling which had sprung up in the minds of certain individuals towards me, or to some less painful cause, I was not informed; but whatever may

have been its occasion, it cost me a great deal of precious time, squandered in days of enervating anxiety and nerveless discouragement.

My readers may be inclined to wonder why I did not rid myself of all these troubles, by resigning my charge, and seeking a more congenial field.

This is my explanation :

Had I consulted my own feelings and judgment, I should have adopted this course : but I relied upon the experience and wisdom of another, and consented to remain a while longer. My adviser was Mr. Oracular Blunt.

“For the salvation of Bubbleton,” said he, “stand firm at your post. To go away would be a relief to you, but the parish would suffer by the step. You have made friends here among the least heathenish people in the society, and were you to leave, they would resent the treatment you have received as a personal injury, and withdraw from the parish. Then, what would become of the others, no longer *salted* by the influence of worthier souls? No minister in Christendom would peril his peace by coming among them, so long as a field remains unoccupied in the Fejee Islands, or in any other preferable department of heathenism! The probability is that Bubbleton would not be converted until the very last day of grace, and that its resuscitated virtue would walk, dim and spectral, in the very rear of the redeemed host, that is to come to Zion with songs and everlasting joys! No, no, Brother Chester, don’t flinch from

the sacrifice, but give yourself to Bubbleton as Dr. Judson has given himself to the Burmans.”

In this characteristic manner, and with these whimsical suggestions, did Mr. Oracular Blunt exhort me to faithfulness, and inculcate that grim virtue — self-denial.

XVIII.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

It was remarkable how, under these disagreeable experiences, the temper of Mr. Peppery changed towards me. At the time when I seemed to enjoy the general favor of the parish, Mr. Peppery considered me quite intolerable. When, however, some tokens of disapprobation appeared among my former friends, he began to modify the severity of his dislike. In proportion to the extent and energy of the opposition—as nearly as he could determine it—was the progress of his growing regard for me.

Unpopularity appeared to him the evidence and seal of moral worth. He graduated his esteem by the adverse ratio of popular favor. The expression, “Woe be unto you when all men shall speak well of you!” seemed to have monopolized a large share of his meditations during life. The only road to his friendship led through the martyr-trodden waste of persecution.

When, at length, the active little reformer had satisfied himself that a collision was inevitable between

the parish and its pastor, he hesitated no longer in arraying his combustible personality on the side of the latter. He became a constant worshipper at church ; and, though I avoided getting frantic with any of the ideas of reform, and showed no disposition to annihilate church or state, he listened to my sermons with respectful interest, and even manifested towards me an affectionate solicitude. He formed a habit of waiting for me at the close of the service, when he would grasp my hand in a spasm of sympathy — whisper in my ear, with his waspish voice, some solemn scriptural charge — and finally, with a lingering look of compassion (as if he were in the momentary expectation of seeing me immolated), pass mournfully down the aisle, and hurry from the church. Every trace of his former antipathy had disappeared. He seemed to recognize me as a partaker of his own destiny. And, indeed, I used to fancy sometimes, after one of his peculiar ceremonies, that the fiery little man was managing some fearful spell, or consummating some preternatural influence, to conjure away my reason, and twist my fate into his own.

This unaccountable behavior of Mr. Peppery could not, of course, pass unobserved by so vigilant a parish ; and it were quite superfluous to remark that it occasioned an immense amount of speculation, which did not tend to enhance my popularity, or restore serenity to the clouded sky of Bubbleton.

One day, Mr. Arlington took the liberty of observing to me —

“I find, Brother Chester, there is considerable feeling in the parish in reference to your intimacy with Mr. Peppery.”

“Ah,” returned I, “the parish is imaginative. Its concern is quite premature, for I am not aware that any such intimacy subsists.”

“The people judge only by what they see,” continued Mr. Arlington, significantly; “and you will admit that Mr. Peppery’s conduct is very singular. Why, he has the very air of a conspirator, Brother Chester.”

“I confess that he appears to me as a very singular man,” I answered; “but I am astonished that the parish, after having known him so long, should try to make me accountable for his eccentricities. Is not this a most preposterous piece of injustice, Brother Arlington?”

“Undoubtedly, it is unjust; but then the people feel that circumstances warrant their apprehensions. They know Mr. Peppery to be a dangerous individual — a man leagued with the enemies of our glorious constitution — a reviler of our national honor,— in short, a political incendiary. They observe that, ever since the day you preached that remarkable sermon on truth, Mr. Peppery has attended on your ministry, and manifested the most unequivocal interest in your affairs. Can you wonder that they regard you with some distrust, in view of your having secured the approval of such a man? Is it not natural that they should identify your principles with

his? Really, it is much to be regretted," concluded Mr. Arlington, with benign sorrow, "that such a mischievous person should connect himself at all with a minister of ours."

It was but a day or two subsequent to this conversation, that Mr. Peppery waited upon me at home. He certainly did exhibit the air of a conspirator, as he grasped my hand, peered into my face, and demanded, with all the energy of his terrific little voice :

"Is n't it about time you gave them another shot, Brother Chester?"

I recoiled from the waspish little reformer, with a feeling akin to terror. There was something almost supernatural in the solemn fierceness and suppressed impatience of his manner.

"Another shot! Who?" exclaimed I, half recovering.

"Why, the parish—the church, to be sure. An't you going to blow them again?"

"Blow the parish?—the church? I'm not sure I understand you."

"Not understand me? Yes you do! Come! where's the use of playing a part? Did n't you give them the sermon I exhorted you to preach—or something as good? and did n't it echo through Bubbleton, like the blast of a trumpet? Has n't the parish been in an uproar about it, ever since? and an't the hypocrites resolved to expel you from your charge? Not understand me? Nonsense! Is n't it war between you? and have n't you got to defend yourself?"

"Brother Peppery," said I, now quite recovered, "let us understand each other entirely, if we can. You mistake my disposition and intentions. The sermon to which you allude was not suggested by your visit. That it has occasioned some sensation in the parish, I was informed. What the issue is to be, I cannot tell. But I have no desire to provoke strife. While I hope for courage to speak the truth to my hearers, faithfully, I shall exert myself to promote peace. I should not deem myself justified in pursuing the course which you appear to have expected."

As I had foreseen, in thus "defining my position," I put Mr. Peppery into a passion. He snarled at me, with a most furious scowl of disappointment:

"Are you, then, the same tame-spirited, compromising slip of a recreant ministry I found you before? The Lord help such drivellers, and those who look to them to be equipped for the battle of life! How miserably have I redeemed the time, of late, listening to your timid twaddle! Well!" shrieked the little reformer, as he darted through the doorway, "I was a fool for thinking that a drop of God's grace survived in any minister, or church, in this doomed city. They are altogether become unprofitable, and the wrath of Heaven is revealed against them!"

I thought the mad little prophet had gone, but he returned upon me, with a flash of latent scorn playing over his fiery face, and exclaimed:

"Remember, you have put your hand to the plough, and now you look back. You have lost the

favor of the hypocrites, and proved yourself unworthy the confidence of the righteous. You are unfit for that heavenly kingdom of justice and truth, which we will establish, with God's help, upon the ruins of political oppression, and in defiance of priestly poltroonery. All true men to the rescue! Farewell."

And there lay my course—and there lies every minister's course—between Scylla, unyielding rock of conservatism—and Charybdis, wrathful whirlpool of radicalism.

X I X.

THE SEWING-CIRCLE.

It is five o'clock, and I am about to pay my customary respects to the sewing-circle.

The sewing-circle is an important auxiliary to the Bubbleton society. Its ostensible object is charity, but its earnings are more frequently devoted to the payment of some of the current expenses of the parish. It is governed by an active and vigorous maiden lady, who has attained to "years of discretion," and who shall be known to my readers as Miss Ophelia Pennyweight. It is numerously attended by a class of ladies, who prove their efficiency both with their needles and their tongues; and while they make themselves very useful with one instrument, they become very entertaining with the other — thus enlivening the monotony of toil by domestic narratives, mysterious confidences, startling innuendoes, and flashing repartees.

I really wonder if any society exists, or could exist, independently of the sewing-circle? How would Christian women dispose of their superabundant vitality, without this social and humanitarian

“sphere”? How could you insure that “general diffusion of knowledge,” in reference to all matters pertaining to the parish and the minister, or provide for the discussion of all the local interests and personal eccentricities that attract the vigilant eye of woman, without these intellectual assemblies? How could you preserve a healthy circulation of mental life in the head and members of the parish, without this sparkling infusion of wit, gossip, pertness, and pleasantry?

We might as well think of giving up the daily newspaper, and rail against debating clubs and political caucuses, as think of dispensing with sewing-circles, or complain of the large freedom of speech, or liberality of investigation, which they proverbially exhibit.

Miss Ophelia Pennyweight is not beloved in the Bubbleton circle. She is too austere, sharp, despotic, and practical — too old, and angular, and unsocial — to make much progress in winning affection anywhere. But she is adapted to her position, and all the ladies recognize her superiority in the management of the circle. They complain of her — they revile her — they make themselves merry with her dignified and old-fashioned manners — when she is not present; — but they know that the circle would not survive three months, without her rough energy and homely common sense. Moreover, much as they ridicule her at a distance, in her presence they are all more or less awed by a sense of her authority, and the boldest of

them would not like to encounter her deliberate and stony frown, or still less to receive an oral reproof, in her keen and rather shrewish voice.

Not that Miss Ophelia Pennyweight imposed any restrictions upon conversation, so long as it did not interfere with work,—she doubtless knew too much about the disposition of her sex to attempt anything so preposterous,—but she usually maintained on her own part a severe and silent gravity, and saw, with the quick eye of an overseer, when a piece of absorbing gossip was likely to trip the toes of Industry. Nor was the excellent spinster ignorant of her unpopularity; but, like other strong-minded rulers, she derived, from the exercise of power, that consolation which was denied her in the affections of those over whom she presided.

No lady stood in greater dread of Miss Ophelia Pennyweight's authority, than my pretty friend, Miss Lark; and for the reason, I suppose, that no one else incurred her rebuke so often. Miss Pennyweight and Miss Lark may be said to have occupied opposite poles of womanhood. Their characteristics were mutually repugnant. One was practical — the other was ideal. Miss Pennyweight's universe was a work-shop; Miss Lark's universe was a kind of fairy-land. One was consecrated to Utility, and her Bible was a book of domestic recipes; the other was consecrated to Poetry, and she had a monthly revelation in the pages of the Ladies' Book.

Miss Pennyweight had bade adieu to Youth, and

cast Love out of the window, while Hope was tolerated only in the antiquated garb of Faith ; but Miss Lark had half the treasury of Youth unspent — was not sceptical in reference to the affections, or the susceptibilities of men, and owned a large estate in Dream-Land, under the fantastical supervision of Expectation and Desire.

One of the rare occasions that drew Miss Pennyweight from her austere silence, at the meetings of the circle, was when Miss Lark chanced to allude to the poets, or indulged in some dreamy utterance of sentiment. Then the spinster would descend from her cold height, with such a terrible and wrathfully-contemptuous "*fiddle-stick*," that poor Miss Lark would retire beneath her blushes and her needle-work — feeling, I dare say, how hopelessly the avenues of Poetry and Beauty were closed against her barbarous and unsympathizing superior.

It so happens that Miss Lark is the happy person who entertains the sewing-circle; this particular afternoon ; and being, herself, by virtue of a good heart and an obliging disposition, something of a favorite in the parish, and the weather presenting no obstacle to neutralize the attractions of her rooms, there is an unusually large company ; and when I join the circle, a little after five o'clock, I do not find it wanting in gayety or interest.

First I observe a group of girls, seated together in the door-ward corner of the room — occupying very low seats, which are found favorable to low, confiden-

tial talk — busy enough with their fingers, no doubt, for they are within range of the president's awful eyes, but showing a far deeper interest in what their fancies pursue, as they whisper there with bent heads, and flashes of mirth that gleam through their pendent curls. They greet me with a clear, sunny, natural look and smile. The "opposition" has not infected them, at least.

Then I encounter a group of middle-aged ladies, among whom are Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Gleason, and by whom the affairs of the parish are being quite earnestly discussed, according to a system borrowed from their experienced husbands. I do not feel so confident of the friendship of these ladies; there is something in their greeting that provokes distrust and after-thought, and my presence seems to have interrupted their discussion, although I leave them, and pass on to take the hands of others.

I reach the president, seated in cold dignity by herself, and employing her lean fingers with a most enigmatical sort of knitting. Miss Ophelia Pennyweight is gracious, in her cold, sharp, antiquated way, and suspends her mysterious knitting about ten seconds to perform the usages of friendship.

Miss Lark has a mother, with whom she lives,— an old lady of sixty, who has known trouble, and toiled hard in the world, since her husband fell — an offering to his country — at Plattsburg; but whose cheerfulness and vivacity make you forget to estimate her years. It is pleasant to sit by her large, comfort-

able old chair, and listen to her strong and happy voice.

At the piano — turning over a pile of music, rather listlessly — I find Miss Arlington. She is not a member of the circle — indeed, rarely attends its meetings — and consequently is not under the president's dominion. She is here, to-day, by entreaty of our mutual friend, Miss Lark. She is, just now, in one of her most hopeless reveries, as I can see even before I approach her. She is not examining the music — she is not hearing the conversation — she is not awed by the terrors of Miss Ophelia Pennyweight; she is apart from us all, locked up in her peculiar sphere, and occupied by thoughts which the circle is not prone to discuss. The circle, no doubt, regards her with some surprise; the middle-aged ladies pronounce her proud, unsocial, arrogant; and conclude, in the largest exercise of their charity, that she must be in love. The girls think her too serious and intellectual for them, but they do not dislike her; — with the unerring instinct of innocence, they have read her countenance, and discerned the texture of her heart, and they have a quiet, reluctant persuasion that she is very, very unhappy.

I am standing by the piano before Miss Arlington raises her head.

I receive the full power of her glance, and am startled by the revelation it affords of her feelings. What an expression of premature anguish, of profound and solemn spiritual anxiety, is recorded on her

youthful countenance ! I have never seen such evidence of inward conflict inscribed upon a face so fair, or such lofty trouble gush from a life outwardly so fortunate and tranquil.

We exchanged but a word ; the parlor was in commotion — we had just been summoned down to tea.

“ Mr. Chester,” said Miss Lark, in her amiable way, “ I hope you may cheer Louisa’s spirits by touching some kindred chord, for the rest of us have signally failed. She has been very moody this afternoon.”

“ Mr. Chester knows my whims and moods,” returned Miss Arlington, with a changed expression ; “ they are not worthy to tax his skill, or your care. Come, I believe you said tea was ready.”

After tea, there is not much trace of Miss Arlington’s revery, and Miss Lark, freed from anxiety on her account, begins to tease me for a contribution to an album. After holding out as long as I could have done if I had been Petrarch himself, I promise the inevitable poem. — Then I am good-naturedly taken to task for having exchanged, the preceding Sabbath, with Brother Oracular Blunt.

“ How could you ?” demanded Miss Lark, pathetically.

“ What is your objection to Mr. Oracular Blunt ?” demanded I.

“ O, he is such a horrid preacher ! no refinement —”

“ Horrid do you call him ? I cannot agree with you. I find him among the pleasantest of compan-

ions. No refinement, Miss Lark? Why, I find him one of the gentlest of friends — he is like a brother.”

“No poetry,” persisted Miss Lark, with earnestness; “no sentiment —”

“No *fiddle-stick*, then!” retorted Miss Ophelia Pennyweight, with all the contempt that could be wrung from her sour dignity.

Poor Miss Lark was abashed, but she rallied, and resumed:

“He preaches at you so terribly — he talks so frightfully plain — he makes you think so meanly of yourself — he has such a savage earnestness about him, all the while, that none of us, I’m sure, can enjoy hearing him at all. Do you think we can, Louisa?”

I glanced at the person thus appealed to, and saw the print of the revery on her countenance again. She answered, speaking softly, and to herself, rather than addressing any one else:

“I like Mr. Blunt, I think he is consistent; I admire him.”

Miss Lark put up her hands, and seemed speechless.

“You quite amaze me, Louisa!” she exclaimed, finally; “admire Oracular Blunt! Why, there’s a scowl upon the whole church when he enters the pulpit. You know our people can’t bear him.”

“I spoke but for myself,” answered Miss Arlington, sadly.

"But your taste was not always so odd, dear?" pursued Miss Lark.

"My *taste!*" cried Miss Arlington, with startling emphasis; "I did not suppose it a thing with which taste has, properly, much to do. — Were we speaking of the fashion of a bonnet, or of something rather more essential and permanent? Is the saving of one's soul a process in which the great thing is to exercise taste and grow fastidious?"

Miss Lark was troubled by these words. They seemed to have been coined in Mr. Oracular Blunt's own mint; and the thought of having her gentle friend infected with that barbarian's spirit, was certainly alarming to one so conscious of nerves and poetry.

But the honest pastor of D—— was not released without scars:

"My husband thought he insulted the congregation, and I thought so too," said Mrs. Gleason, who, by the way, was always of her husband's mind.

"Mr. W. thinks him a very ill-bred minister," added Mrs. Wilkins, who always designated her companion by that imposing initial.

And the lady glanced reproachfully at me, as if to impress the fact that the parish did not endorse my estimate of Mr. Blunt.

Miss Lark could not help looking somewhat triumphant.

Miss Arlington relapsed into her hopeless revery.

I expressed my surprise that Mr. Gleason should

have thought the congregation insulted by Mr. Blunt's plain dealing, and that Mr. Wilkins should consider him an ill-bred minister.

The ladies saw nothing surprising in these opinions. As Miss Lark had said, Mr. Blunt preached right *at* you, with an appalling directness that gave you no chance of escape. He surrounded you with his war-like engines, and pressed you with his fiery lines of argument and expostulation, as if you were the chief sinner in the universe. In the closeness and ferocity of his attack, he grew personal,—he seemed to mean *you*, and nobody else,—he held you up by yourself, as if you were a criminal, and invited everybody to behold your guilt. In a word, he was the most impudent and frightful of preachers! he disordered your nerves, irritated your temper, and destroyed your peace. He turned your church into a court of justice, and, instead of administering the comfortable truths of the Gospel, arraigned you for misdemeanors and found you guilty.

Such were the charges preferred against my friend, Mr. Oracular Blunt, on the part of Bubbleton. The main fault of that minister seemed to consist in the simplicity with which he appropriated the leading characteristics of the apostles to the purposes of his own ministry. Unsophisticated man that he was! he spent his life in the noble delusion, that his chief business was to tell his hearers the truth, with the plainest and fewest words, leaving the result with Him who gave him his commission.

The conversation was still pursuing this edifying course, when Mr. Arlington arrived. That gentleman's calm exterior was a little ruffled, as one accustomed to study his deportment might see. Through his refined courtesy and bland smile, gleamed the tokens of unwonted excitement — perhaps of deep and ill-suppressed passion.

“Have you heard the news from the city, Brother Chester?” he inquired, sitting at my side, after having paid his respects to the ladies.

“I have not,” I returned; “pray what is the news?”

“Why, it seems there was a riot, or nearly that, yesterday —”

“A riot, sir!”

“Yes, in the Abolitionist Hall. A very disgraceful affair it must have been, I fear.”

“Was it a political disturbance? Ah, now I remember that Mr. Thompson* was to have spoken in Boston, yesterday, on slavery.”

“You have guessed the source of the mischief. Our free-born people will not permit Englishmen to interfere with their institutions. They feel themselves competent to manage their own affairs. I think this meddlesome incendiary might have anticipated trouble.”

* The allusion is to the scene of Mr. Thompson's first appearance in Boston, not to the scene of November, 1850.

“Was Mr. Thompson, then, actually mobbed?” cried I.

“His meeting was broken up,” answered Mr. Arlington, “and he saw fit to secure himself by flight. The rioters were very much incensed, it is said, and were ready to proceed to the most sanguinary acts.”

“He is understood to have made his escape, then?” said I.

“Yes, the Abolitionists covered him with their bucklers, and got him safely out of the hall. The mob was hard after him, but he eluded pursuit, and found a place of refuge somewhere. He has doubtless left the city, before now.”

As I sat ruminating over the recital, Mr. Arlington resumed:

“It seems the Yankee fanatics did not come off so well from the *mêlée*. I hear of half a dozen who were more or less injured, in defending this foreign agitator. They will not receive much sympathy, I am afraid. If they persist in violating the national feelings of the people, and in supporting English emissaries, like Mr. Thompson, they have no reason to complain of the patriotic indignation which their fanaticism excites!”

“Why, father!” exclaimed Miss Arlington (and her face glowed with interest and amazement), “you do not surely intend to apologize for this outrage, by calling the ruffianly spirit of those rioters *patriotic indignation*?”

“We will not argue, my daughter,” quoth Mr.

Arlington, somewhat disconcerted, and with a little tartness in his tone. "Mr. Peppery has imposed enough discussion upon me to-night, already. A very desperate man!"

"Was Mr. Peppery at the meeting yesterday?" I inquired.

"Certainly, he was. He would not have missed the occasion on any account. And his zeal has cost him dear, I assure you!"

"Has anything befallen him?" I inquired, in considerable alarm.

"Yes, he was thrown down, in the tumult, and trampled very badly. He was brought home, this afternoon, pretty much insensible.—His injuries are quite serious indeed."

Miss Lark uttered a slight scream,—Miss Arlington leaned her brow upon her hand,—Miss Pennyweight suspended her knitting.

There was a strong sensation in the circle, for Mr. Peppery was familiarly known to every person present, and his misfortune inspired the lively sympathy of most of them.

"I went round to see the reckless man, this evening," said Mr. Arlington, "but he no sooner saw me than he forgot his pains, and began to assail me with his Garrisonian fanaticism.—He is a thorough madman—as unmanageable as a wild tiger. By the way, Brother Chester," added the parishioner, "he had a good deal of denunciation to offer against your—

self.— I am glad to find that his singular intimacy with you is over.”

“Nevertheless,” answered I, “it is but right that I should go and see the poor man in his affliction.”

And I went.

XX.

THE ABOLITIONISTS.

I FOUND poor Mr. Peppery in a very sad condition indeed. His physical injuries were serious enough to awaken sympathy ; but the excitement of the riot, together with the pain he had endured, had acted so powerfully upon his peculiar temperament as to render him partially delirious. His ravings sparkled with revolutionary epithets. He summoned his brother-reformers to the conflict, by the most exciting appeals. He hurled upon the oppressors and their apologists a torrent of invective, as vivid in its conception as Scriptural metaphors could render it, and as lofty in its tone as the periods of Rienzi or of Sheridan. The entire nature of the man glowed with the fanaticism of liberty and self-devotion.

It was my first visit to Mr. Peppery's home, and I soon perceived that his family — which consisted of a wife and three children — were not less objects of sympathy than himself. Both the furniture of the house and the clothing of its inmates betrayed great destitution. It was evident that the little reformer

devoted his whole time to his ungrateful country. He had not done a day's work, as the poor wife subsequently told me, for three months. The oldest child — a ragged, scowling little urchin of some eight years — told me, with angry tears in his eyes, that he "wished there never had been any niggers made!" And, indeed, he seemed likely to grow up with as great an antipathy for his colored brethren, as his father had expressed for their enslavers.

A large number of Mr. Peppery's neighbors and acquaintances were present, and I saw, by the sympathy which they uniformly expressed, that he was not likely to want any aid which it was in their power to render. Satisfied of this, I soon withdrew, without having attracted the reformer's personal notice.

Grouped around the doorway, and half-illuminated by one of the street-lamps, stood about a dozen men, earnestly discussing the riot. In the hope of learning more fully the particulars of the scene, I lingered and gave ear to their observations. Presently I discovered another listener, standing near by, in the person of a tall and rather distinguished-looking man, who held his cloak before his face, as if desirous of concealing his features. There was a certain air about this individual that instantly impressed me with the idea of his being a stranger in Bubbleton.

"I pity Peppery, with all my heart," observed one of the men,— "a good fellow by nature, only spoiled by this Abolition humbug."

"Ah, that's it," said another; "these Abolitionists are a curse to the country."

"They do the poor niggers infinitely more harm than good," asserted another; "they only exasperate their masters."

"And foster sectional prejudices between the North and South."

"And play into the hands of English spies, like this Thompson."

Here I observed the stranger start, and shrug his shoulders.

"I doubt all that, neighbors," cried a new voice, which I recognized as that of Harry Hanson, the blacksmith; "I doubt it, sirs."

"Doubt what, Harry?"

"What you say against the Abolitionists."

"Ah, I knew *you* sympathized with them," said one of the men, "and more's the pity! — Look at Peppery, poor dog! and beware."

"Friend Peppery is a little fanatical, I grant," returned the blacksmith; "but, Lord! I like him all the better for it. Why, his very rage does him honor!"

"I don't see why."

"Because it shows that he has some appreciation of the wrong he has enlisted against.—That's why I like the Abolitionists, all in all. They act like men in *earnest*. They give things their right names. They don't flatter, nor dissemble. They fawn neither to churchmen nor to politicians, but tell them, in

blunt speech, what they ought to do, and belabor them soundly because they won't do it. Lord! they are the only men among us who dare give the devil his due, and we are jealous of their courage and honesty! Gentlemen, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves."

"There! hear him! he's almost as mad as Peppery himself."

"Mad!" echoed the blacksmith, towering aloft his gigantic frame, "that's what we always say of men who are in earnest, in any great cause. Don't you remember what Festus thought of Paul? Don't you know what the world thought of Luther, in his day? Why, I suspect that same Wittemberg monk must have seemed the maddest of men, to the ignorant people, and priestly buffoons, and Romish cardinals, and immaculate popes, and tricky kings.

"Don't you remember what they thought of Columbus, too? — a man whose madness moved the mirth of scholars, and the contempt of princes; but a madness, nevertheless, that we Americans have long been reconciled to, I dare say! Then think, too, of that eminent madman of ours, George Washington, and some thousands of fellow-madmen, who gave their lives and fortunes and sacred honors for the trivial consideration of being their own masters, and transmitting freedom to such an undeserving generation of poltroons as we are, gentlemen!

"Lord! when we take the trouble to think a little, it turns out that we are prodigiously indebted to those

madmen, for various reasons. Perhaps, now, this *Abolition madness* may be found to be of the same order, gentlemen. It certainly appears to have something to do with freedom, and brotherhood, and the rights of man."

At the conclusion of this speech, the stranger tapped his boot upon the pavement, as if he would encore the sentiment; but most of the others grumbled and dissented, and growled "Nonsense!"

"Gentlemen," pursued the blacksmith, speaking with much excitement, "the Abolitionists are the only people among us who realize what American slavery is. Lord! the rest of the people talk about it, as though it were a mere invention of some story-writer. Its REALITY don't take hold of them. They speculate upon it, as though it were a supposition that somebody had raised; the Abolitionists treat it as a *fact*, and we declare that they are beside themselves!"

"Humbug! do you expect us to believe all that's said about the miseries of the slaves? — Mere imposition — mere Abolition capital. I dare say they are, generally, as comfortable and well-treated a set of dogs as can be found the world over!"

"There it is!" responded the blacksmith; — "you treat the whole thing as a fiction. In your eyes, slavery, to a certain class of human beings, is a comfortable condition. The slaves would be contented enough with their lot, if the Abolitionists would let them alone! They have really no wrongs to complain

of,—the brutality under which they groan, and to escape from which they often peril all things, is only the scandalous invention of northern fanatics! This is the agreeable belief of nine-tenths of the northern people. If it were not for the deeper-sighted and bold-spoken liberty men — who insist on telling the world *just what slavery is* — this enormous wrong might remain, undisturbed, till doomsday.

“Lord! neighbors mine,” continued Harry Hanson, “don’t repeat that shameful nonsense about the Abolitionists only making slavery worse. Why, in the first place, *it can’t be made worse*,—the devil himself could n’t improve on the villanies American slavery permits and legalizes! Then, in the second place, will you please to tell me whether all reforms have not been effected, in a great degree, by stern denunciations of wrong? And yet, you speak as if the only way to benefit the slaves is to say nothing about their wrongs, but assume that they are well enough treated already! Lord! what reasoners you are, gentlemen!”

Here the stranger again tapped the pavement, and partially lowered his cloak from his face.—The anti-Abolitionists did not reply.

“By the word of Old Hickory, I believe Harry has the right of it,” said one of the blacksmith’s listeners. “At any rate, I don’t relish the notion — to come back to the riot — of having our citizens trod under foot by a Boston mob.—I don’t justify Peppery in all he says, but when he goes up to our Puri-

tan city to attend a meeting of his party, he has a constitutional right, I think, to the preservation of his limbs and ribs, if not of his freedom of speech ! They might have bruised the Englishman to their hearts' content, and I should have had nothing to say ; but to trample a fellow-citizen, like poor neighbor Peppery — why, the ruffians merit the whipping-post ! ”

“ Such a row as that of yesterday,” said the blacksmith, rearing himself aloft for another speech, “ is a disgrace — an eternal disgrace to Boston, and to the whole North. Not altogether because a few men were injured and a few women abused, but because our boasted right of free speech was violated. This great American doctrine was shamelessly disavowed, in the very place where it ought to have been held most sacred, and that, too, before and against an *Englishman* — the last man in the world to whom we should have confessed our inability to support our principle. This, gentlemen, is what cuts me to the quick : The thought that American citizens cannot bear the free gaze and free speech of mankind, but must resort to mob force, like base tyrants, to put down plain-dealing men !

“ I have heard men, to-day, apologizing, everywhere, for this ruffianly outrage,” continued the indignant blacksmith. “ I have heard it said that Thompson deserved such treatment, and much worse, for presuming to interfere with our affairs, — as if the whole world were not interested, rightly and inevi-

tably, in such an abomination as American slavery ! I have heard men expatiate on the sins of *England*, as a reproach to this reformer for talking about *ours*, — as if he were accountable, as an individual, for the crimes of his country — as if a true man had not the *right* to speak truth in all places and before all men — whoever may cringe before his rebuke !

“ Now, gentlemen, just clear your sight of the miserable scales of prejudice which your national conceit has hung around your reason, and look at this business, for an instant, through my eye-glass : Here is Mr. Thompson about to allege against us certain sins, and to exhort us to repent and get rid of them. Grant that our self-constituted monitor belongs to rather an ungracious family, — grant that he is supposed to have a prejudice or so against us. Is there any human reason why we should not hear him ? If he misstates our case, here we are to set him right. If he accuses us wrongfully, here we are with the amplest opportunity to justify ourselves. But if he puts the case exactly as it is, however it may cut our self-esteem — if we are actually guilty of what he accuses us, and if the whole universe knows that we are — why then, gentlemen, in the name of God, what is our best course ? Will it do us any good to set the dogs on this plain-spoken fellow, and so drown his voice for a moment in a beastly *bow-wow* ? Don't you see that this course would neither help us to get free of our sins, nor induce the world to overlook our guilt ? — but that it would only render us as pusil-

lanimous as we are criminal? And yet this is just the course which our Christian and intellectual city of Boston saw fit to pursue towards cousin Thompson; and here you are, gentlemen, giving it your sanction! Lord! we are not a whit wiser than the Jews!"

The effect of this address was highly creditable to the blacksmith. The men had no reply to make, except a few grumbling evasions and petulant expletives, uttered by the more bigoted part.

The stranger dropped his cloak from his face, and, advancing to Harry Hanson, said, in a voice modulated by emotion:

"Give me your hand, my dear sir, and accept my thanks for having so ably vindicated a much-calumniated cause. Your country may have hope in its final redemption from the curse of slavery, while it can boast citizens as enlightened, discriminating, and just as yourself."

"Lord!" exclaimed the blacksmith, yielding his hand mechanically to the stranger, and regarding him with a look of indescribable amazement, "Lord! *you* here? And you have heard my egotistical speech?"

"I have heard nothing but what you may be proud for having said," returned the stranger, with superb politeness; then he added—"O, brother! it is a consolation to know, that there are men of kindred hearts, both in America and in England, whom the Atlantic does not sever, nor national antipathies estrange, but who are destined to labor together in harmony for the common freedom and glory of mankind."

"Nobly said!" cried Harry Hanson; "it's a sentiment I respond to with all my heart. Long may you live to proclaim it, and when mobs—"

"Hush!" interposed the stranger; "no allusions to that, if you please. Here is a trifle for our zealous friend, whose misfortune I much regret; will you give it him?"

But the blacksmith declined the proffered gold.

"None of that from you," said he; "we are able to take care of our own destitute; I will see that Peppery wants for nothing. Give all you have to those whose helpers are few."

"Yours is a noble spirit," said the stranger, with emotion; "*your* pride I can appreciate and honor. Adieu!"

"Wait!" said Harry Hanson, as the stranger was moving off; and he addressed to him some question in a suppressed voice.

"O, be under no concern," was the response; "I am not friendless. Again, adieu!"

And the unknown man moved away, and disappeared.

"Well!" exclaimed the astonished group, looking from each other into the thoughtful face of the blacksmith, as he leaned abstractedly against the lamp-post. "Who is that complimentary fellow?"

"A man whose acquaintance I made, yesterday, in Boston."

"At the abolition meeting?"

"Yes."

"You witnessed the riot, then?"

"To be sure. I was a rioter myself."

"You?"

"Yes; the Adam got the better of me, and I made a very silly use of my strength."

"What did you do?"

"Knocked several very ugly fellows down."

"Did you, indeed? You must have been very much provoked."

"So I was: they were trampling Peppery's breath out of him — the ruffians!"

"Ah, *that* was your provocation. So it was you who brought Peppery home?"

"Yes."

"But you have n't told us who this strange fellow is. Was he a rioter, too?"

"No," returned Harry Hanson, walking thoughtfully away; "the stranger is your British spy, cousin Thompson."

XXI.

OMENS.

THERE is another commotion in Bubbleton. — Poor, susceptible, fractious, whimsical, misguided Bubbleton ! Its annals, if faithfully written, would prove as diverting, I presume, as — the most improbable romance. But I, assuredly, shall not become its annalist, beyond an allusion to those events and persons associated with my own ministerial experience.

The winter has been marked by an excess of dissipation, which has been especially fatal to young men. Never before have the ravages of intemperance been so fearfully great. Its alluring agencies are in every street, — its victims are in every class of society, — its scandals touch almost every home. Those who were the pride and hope of our community, are being transformed into idiots and monsters.

There are a few men in Bubbleton who calculate the magnitude of the vice, — who perceive the abyss into which it is bearing us ; and who hope, with God's help and their own Christian efforts, to break the horrible enchantment by which men are enthralled.

A temperance society is organized, which holds meetings every Sunday evening in the town hall—provides for public lectures, and institutes a system of private exertion among the most accessible of the fallen people.

It is naturally expected that the clergy will bear a conspicuous part in this movement, and few of them seem inclined to disappoint the expectation. For my own part, I have just delivered a lecture in the town hall, which is very fully reported in the *Bubbleton Gazette*, and violently assailed in the *Morning News*.—The attack is written by a correspondent of that journal, and it is not difficult to recognize in its tone, the rancor of personal enmity and the bias of private interest.

About this time, it is authentically announced to all interested persons, that my late much-abused parishioner, Robert Fiscal, has taken seats in the Plush-street Church.

Within that haven of sanctity he is, doubtless, destined to find peace; for the Rev. Mr. Downy will not enlist for the temperance campaign, nor connect his placid personality with any of the agitating ideas of reform.

Indeed, so long has that conciliatory minister devoted himself to the consideration of the sins of Babylon, that his mind recurs, with the impulse of habit, to those historical abominations, whenever he proceeds to arrange his pulpit batteries; and he is favored with as delightful an unconsciousness of the

modern and local iniquity of Bubbleton, as the inhabitants of another planet. He is a kind of archæologist of sin,—accustomed to dig into the cold lava-beds and ancient petrifications of evil, and to explore the obstructed labyrinth of antiquity, for vestiges of the passions that made their burning sign, and cooled in death, so many centuries ago!

Besides my lecture at the town hall, I have had some plain discourse from the pulpit, with the young ~~men~~ of my congregation, in reference to their habits, temptations, perils, and responsibilities.

This effort has been variously received, and warmly discussed, by the parish. Half a dozen candid and thoughtful youths, with several aged hearers, come and thank me for my counsel. Old Silas Willet is tearful and tremulous as he expresses his gratification.

Others take a different view of the matter. Young gentlemen of the Cyrus Thistleblow stamp are restless and indignant. They feel themselves insulted by the supposition that *they* can be in danger. They dislike to hear one portray the course of dissipation—the fatal retrogression of character,—because it sharpens their sense of criminality. It is as though they had been observed in their disreputable haunts, and were being exposed to the censure and contempt of manly honor. They accuse the preacher of impertinence. They stigmatize such lectures as “personal.” They know what they are about, and will not brook the dictation of “croaking ministers.” The Cyrus Thistleblow order is august, with its unexceptionable broad-

cloth, and fine white linen, and irreproachable gloves, and other transient upholstery of accomplished coxcombry. If a poor, inexperienced minister dares discompose such imperial equanimity, by assuming that it has anything to do with the abstractions of morality, or the claims of enterprising and noble manhood, let him awake to a sense of his temerity when he finds himself grandly deserted, and hears of a new inundation of popularity at the Plush-street Church!

The parish committee are in the deeps of trouble. They are convinced that such independence and plain speaking will never be tolerated in the society. The minister must concede something—a compromise must be effected—or dissension and ruin will ensue.

Already several families have withdrawn, in great resentment at my course—most of them being interested in that fatal trade which is the source of all this mischief. The congregation is reduced to about half its original numbers, for the “novelty-seekers,” who comprised a large proportion of my hearers during the first few months, have found a new object of interest and are attracted elsewhere.

I have had another conversation with Mr. Arlington.

He retains his gracious amiability and dignified courtesy; but intimates—with frequent sighs—his regret that I should so severely interpret my duty, and his fears that I shall not be sustained by the parish. He is much grieved by the disaffection of the Thistleblows, for it depends very much upon their

favor whether we "take a leading position" among the genteel ranks of Bubbleton.

Mr. Arlington does not sympathize with the temperance reform. True, he holds that downright drunkenness is wrong, because it is vulgar; but good liquor, discreetly used, is one of the blessings of Providence,—it graces hospitality, gives zest to friendship, and refreshes the dry waste of business;—he disputes the wisdom and the possibility of banishing it from the social board. The temperance men may be *honest*,—he presumes most of them are,—but they are not acquainted with human nature, and their idea—like other reform ideas of the day—is preposterous and fanatical.

Miss Arlington has ceased attending church altogether. I seldom meet her now, for my calls at her home are not frequent, and she mingles scarcely any with the society. Indeed, there is little pleasure in meeting her, for her countenance is a painful study—her character a profound enigma; and still, such is the fascination of the mystery that envelops her, I find her monopolizing more of my time than I am willing to devote to psychological reveries.

To increase the gloom of my prospect, my salary remains in arrears, and I am compelled to contract debts.

A new source of torment! No words in our capacious language express an idea of *misery* so profound as these brief definitives—IN DEBT.—Here is the essence of dependence, slavery, anxiety, fear, servility

—indeed, of every element of human suffering, except, perhaps, remorse. If I owe a man, I seem to have sold myself, and my creditor appears to possess an indefinable, vast, and altogether horrible control over me.—I avoid him, with a ridiculous kind of feeling that resembles guilt,—no rogue can be more solicitous of walking clear of the man he has robbed! If I must meet him, it is with the timidity of a dog that has been flogged. I seem to be immeasurably below him,—I meanly concede his superiority,—I defer to his most palpable stupidities. I feel as though his favor, somehow, made my sunshine, and I dread his resentment—as I do the rise of flour and coal. Then I am always scheming to emancipate myself from this terrible fellow. I hoard money like a miser, and live like a hermit, that I may be enabled to buy my freedom. And when, at last, I do get my liberty—for I always pull at the chain till it breaks—I feel something like an impulse to abuse my late tyrant, by way of exhibiting my independence!

I cannot do justice to the annoyances and persecutions which my debts in Bubbleton occasioned me.

I will observe, however, that I was indebted for the most serious of my troubles, to the vigilant watch-care and ingenious devices of Mr. Fiscal. With an admirable promptness, and in a manner that elicited no suspicion, this gentleman bought most of the demands against me, and enjoyed the satisfaction of compelling me to settle with himself.

And I must needs affirm, in justice to Mr. Fiscal's

positive character, that, while he was susceptible of great generosity in his friendship, he was capable of a publican's extortion in his antipathy.

But let me not dwell too long upon these unhappy recollections. Nor let my readers suppose that I was destitute of friends and supporters. There were many in the parish who approved my course, and were ready to make sacrifices for the support of an independent ministry. The reform ideas had penetrated the conservative crust of the society, and were gradually changing its temper and opinions.

Two angry and excited parties were approaching each other from the extreme sections of the parish.

XXII.

A REVIVAL SCENE.

WHILE our affairs were in this threatening and dubious posture, a most exciting "revival" was in progress in one of the neighboring churches.

At the period of which I am writing, these famous meetings were electrifying many of the Congregationalist churches throughout New England. A flame of religious enthusiasm was kindled in the community. Sectarian zeal was enacting another crusade. The world was to be converted by a storm of fanaticism.

The experience of twenty years has not confirmed the wisdom of that experiment. The disastrous effects of the revival system are now pretty generally confessed. It may be safely affirmed, I think, that American Christianity suffers to this day—in the estimation of a respectable class of community—not only from the errors that were propagated during those exciting scenes, but from the *réaction* of that overstrained feeling and morbid exertion which they induced. It is as unwise to overtask the religious sensibilities, as to exhaust the mental or bodily powers.

Nature demands reparation for every kind of excess. Why should we expect a frequent recurrence of the Day of Pentecost? It is not the aim of Providence to develop the Christian life in the soul by a succession of spasms. It is a *growth* — not to be realized, or even favored, by tumultuous excitement, frantic appeals to fear and selfishness, awful threatenings and terrific alarms — but secured under the conscious shelter of Divine Love, in the calm discourse of reason, in the serenity that unveils the heart to the renovating light and blessed harmonies of the universe.

The revivals to which I allude, may be symbolized by the dark wrath of hurricanes, that leave ruin moaning on their track, and prepare the waste for briars to grow and dragons to inhabit. But pure religion has its symbol in the peaceful shining of the sun, that wins forth the inherent beauty of Nature, and clothes the world in the garniture of Praise.

God's process — whether surveyed in the imperceptible movement of constellations, or in the renovation of a human being — is gradual, orderly, sublime.

His renewing influences descend "like the small rain, and distil like the dew." His kingdom cometh not with observation.

For why should a tumult like the tramp of armies, herald the reign of Him we call the Prince of Peace?

But to resume the narrative :

It was a night in March that I was returning from

the house of a parishioner, whom I had visited in severe affliction.

My course lay directly by Dr. Screamer's large church, where the revival was being conducted. Although it was past the hour of ten, the meeting still continued. The building was evidently thronged, for the shadows of figures, standing erect against the upper tier of windows, darkened the ample sweep of the galleries; and a crowd of men filled the porch, or were crammed together in the three outer doorways. The voice of the preacher — shrill and hoarse — with frequent groans of conviction, and cries of sudden terror, and shouts of approval, from the excited audience — rang fearfully into the still ear of night.

There was a fascination about the place that made me pause, and that drew my steps to the thronged entrance.

The porch-lamps glared dim and ghastly upon that compact mass of beings, and the breath of the dense crowd that filled the vast interior of the edifice, issued from the narrow apertures furnished by the half obstructed doors, in a rank, hot, and sickening steam.

It was horrible to think of the infatuated multitude thus wedged within this fatal church, and breathing this abominable atmosphere, charged thick with death !

I had barely secured a footing upon the outer threshold, before I was thrilled by a piercing, protracted shriek.

It was a man's voice — loud, harsh, and awful

beyond anything I had ever heard. It had a certain rude and prolonged vehemence that indicated great physical strength, and reminded one of the despairing cry of a wild beast, rather than of any strictly *human* utterance of woe.

I instantly perceived that the men around me were powerfully agitated by the occurrence.

They pressed forward toward the inner doors, and tried to look over the heads of the intervening throng.

"Is it *he*?" they demanded, in subdued but frantic whispers, reaching over and clutching the clothes of those who stood within.

"A judgment! — behold, a judgment of God!" was thundered from the lips of the preacher.

All eyes were directed toward the pulpit, in strange consternation. The multitude about the central aisle began to sway to and fro, and I heard the shuffle of many feet, mingled with hoarse cries of "Amen! glory to God! A judgment! — a judgment!"

Again was heard that fearful shriek, but lower, fainter than before — as if life itself were departing from the poor wretch.

Then down the aisle ran the cry — almost vindictive in its wild fervor —

"It's a judgment! — a judgment from Almighty God on the scoffer!"

The confusion increased within the church; but over all, the shrill voice of the preacher was distinctly audible, though his form was not visible to me, for he had left the pulpit, and stood exhorting by the altar.

At length I beheld — urging his course madly through the compact throng, and moving his arms like a swimmer in his efforts to reach the door — the large, scarred figure of an old man, who had been shown to me in the streets, not long previous, as Sharkey, the smuggler; and who, as my readers may recollect, was known to be a very liberal supporter of the Plush-street minister.

I saw, in the distortion of his features, and in the wild terror of his look, the revelation of sudden insanity.

The awe-struck crowd gave way as fast as the scanty space would allow; and, like one marked by the curse of Heaven, the old man rushed forth into the night.

“Was ever a judgment more manifest?” exclaimed one, gazing solemnly after the fugitive.

Then I learned that old Sharkey had laid a wager that he would enter the crowded church, and profanely defy the revivalist before the altar; and that, in pursuance of this reckless intention, he had encountered the fierce anathema of the preacher, and, smitten by sudden repentance or superstitious fear — had fallen to the floor with a shriek of madness.*

It was evident that the revivalist realized the advantage, which such an incident was calculated to furnish him.

His voice took an imperious tone. The threaten-

* Several of my readers can verify the truth of this incident.

ings he announced became more and more authoritative. Terrors multiplied around his agitated brow.

A desire seized me to behold the man who swayed these hundreds at his will, and detained them within these horrible walls at the risk of suffocation.

The gallery offered the only chance of gratifying my wish. With great exertion I reached the stairs. Here, as elsewhere, there was a dense, hot throng. Step by step, I made the wearisome ascent, and, pressing through the door that opened on the gallery, the immense magnitude of the audience rose before me with startling effect.

But admiration was not the emotion that made my sight swim and my brain whirl.

It was fear, consternation, at the vile, putrid heat, that rose — a dense, intolerable malaria — from those unconscious victims. Already hundreds seemed as torpid as so many figures of lead. In a few minutes more, as it seemed to my excited fancy, they would have been corpses.

A thrilling, dizzy sense of the danger darted through me in an instant. Without clearly realizing what I was doing — so sudden and imperious was the impulse that seized me — I made my way to the front of the gallery, and shouted with all my voice :

“People ! are you mad ? You are all dying of suffocation ! Open the windows, and clear the house !”

Of course, this was very presumptuous, but, at that

instant, it seemed only the dictate of duty — as, indeed, I still think it was.

“Yes!” echoed the revivalist, glancing up at me with a fierce gesture, “you *are* all mad — mad with the folly of the world! — and suffocating, — yes, with hell fire! Open the windows? — ah! the windows of heaven, that you may have grace to repent!”

The man was frantic, and I did not wonder at it.

But the fatal spell was broken, — the people rose with a new terror, — they began to appreciate their peril. There was a tumultuous rush for the door.

Alas! in giving my hasty alarm, I had not thought of this danger. Would they now trample each other to death, to reward me for my interference?

Leaning over the gallery, I shouted and expostulated; but I might as well have addressed a whirlwind.

And, as my gaze settled upon the scene, embracing with mute horror all its details, I distinguished one figure struggling in the abyss, that brought a cry from my lips and a keen pang to my heart.

It was Miss Arlington!

XXIII.

MISS ARLINGTON.

THIS discovery thrilled my heart, for it bore an alarming conviction to my understanding.— It supplanted one anxiety by another; and I forgot the danger which had just occupied all my thoughts in relation to the assembly, in the new train of fears that suddenly possessed me at the sight of my friend.

Why was Miss Arlington in this church, and amid this fanatical throng? Considering the seriousness of her disposition, her peculiar spiritual experience, and the recent anxieties which had appeared to sadden her mind, it was not probable that any frivolous motive — like the idle curiosity that actuates the thoughtless — could have influenced her attendance at this meeting. No, her feet had turned within these gates, in her earnest search for truth and conviction.

Awakened, as it were, by some spiritual current that throbbed in the air, and finding herself, lonely, on the waste of doubt and mystery, famished by want, tantalized by illusions, beaten by the elements, awed by immensity,— the young pilgrim had summoned all

her latent resolution, and, directing her course by such stars as the driving storm-clouds unveiled, was now seeking to escape from that barren realm, into some land of plenty and some city of refuge. Alas ! that on the frontier of scepticism — taking a glad farewell of its baleful shapes — the fainting pilgrim should plunge into the vortex of superstition, or be lured to the sacrifice of reason, by the semblance of religion and the hope of rest !

I remembered that Miss Arlington had ceased to attend her father's church, about the time this revival commenced ; and it was something nobler than sectarian antipathy, I believe, that made me shudder, as I thought of the influence which these meetings were liable to have exerted over her mind, in this critical stage of her experience.

Perhaps her ardent and serious nature — aspiring toward the grand and awful realities which faith presents — might have kindled in instant sympathy with the lofty and devout passions that swayed these agitated assemblies. — Perhaps she had become, already, a zealot and — a wreck !

These apprehensive thoughts — however I may have elaborated them in this record — occurred to me the very moment I saw Miss Arlington involved in that terrified congregation.

To spring to her rescue, was alike the impulse of manliness and of friendship. But to leave the gallery by the way I had entered it, was no longer a practicable achievement, owing to the mass of people that

were crowded, tumultuously, upon the stairs; and I was compelled to accept the less decorous expedient of vaulting over the railing.

The whole church was a scene of uproar and terror.

The nature of the meeting — the appalling ideas on which the revivalist had dwelt, and the signal retribution that had smitten the scoffer, had excited the feelings of the people beyond the control of reason, and made them doubly susceptible to the panic of sudden alarm. They rushed upon each other with the frenzy of maniacs; — men shouted and struggled — women screamed and fainted; and a few, whose zeal had entirely eclipsed their perceptions, sang and prayed, like saints in the last ecstasy of martyrdom!

Dropping into this dangerous abyss, I was fortunate enough to reach the object of my anxiety, just as she fell, exhausted, in the midst of the mad throng.

A favorable movement of the crowd enabled me to rescue her without much difficulty, and to place her in the recess of a window, quite out of danger.

Then I forced up the sash, and — assuming the privilege of the coolest head in the house — expostulated with the people, and began to ventilate the place.

Gradually a passage was opened through the clotted doorways, and the eager multitude filed out. The cries and the frenzy abated, — the score of the weak and helpless that had fainted were borne homeward, — while the low groans of a few, who thus expressed the injuries they had received, imparted an air of tragic

solemnity to this fearful consummation of the evening's service.

When Miss Arlington recovered her consciousness, she recognized me with an exclamation of painful surprise, and involuntarily averted her face,—a movement that confirmed the saddest apprehensions I had felt for her.

“You have saved me,” she murmured, with her face still turned from me, and speaking in a much-agitated voice; —“you have saved my reason — perhaps my life. I did not know you were here, till I heard your voice from the gallery.—Then I hoped you might not see me; for, O! I think—I fear I must have been mad, almost delirious! But I thank you, Mr. Chester,—it is strange that you should have been here.”

She confessed that I had saved her reason,—that she had been almost delirious! She, then, had sat in the fatal thrall of that sombre-hearted enchanter. Even her strong intelligence and practical sense had not been able to resist the terrific images, and frantic appeals, that had leaped and glared from his lurid rhetoric. Her expressions still evinced the disorder into which her mind had been thrown.

“Calm yourself,” said I; “shake off the baleful influence of this place, and let your better judgment control you.”

“No,” said she, speaking with her customary abstraction of manner, “this can't be the spirit of God

—this can't be truth; for if it were—O, it were better never to feel the one, or behold the other!”

And she shuddered, as if beholding some ghastly spectacle.

“Dear friend! the solemn questionings of a troubled spirit and of a generous mind, meet with but a rude response from such proselyting fanatics,” said I, deeply moved by the anguish she betrayed; “and may God avert from you another trial. But we may now leave the church. Shall I conduct you home?”

“Yes, let me leave this place,” she answered, quickly; “I cannot be myself *here*; O, what a dream it has been!”

We passed down the aisle, where a remnant of the crowd still lingered.

A tall, dark man, his face half-muffled in his cloak, stood regarding us by the outer door through which we passed. It needed not the tremor that agitated my companion, to assure me that this was the revivalist.

I had seen him two years before—under circumstances that I need not now describe; but not until this night had I known *who* it was that conducted this promising revival!

“Miss Arlington, have you often attended these meetings?” inquired I, after we had left the church.

There was some severity in my tone, I suppose, for my mind had recurred to a distant scene.

“Don't be angry with me, Mr. Chester,” she

answered, half-reproachfully; "I have been — too often — O, far too often!"

"Have you spoken with this man — this preacher?"

"Certainly not."

"I am glad to hear it."

"You speak as though he were known to you; is it so?"

"He is known to me but too well. Miss Arlington, need I counsel you to avoid, hereafter, the altar at which he ministers?"

She did not immediately reply, but the hand that rested on my arm trembled.

"I am safe, henceforth, from such danger," she answered at length; "but you intimate that this man is unworthy — is not sincere."

"That is what I would say, since it is needful that you should know it; though I frankly admit that I might not be able to prove, here in Bubbleton, what I assert."

My companion sighed; it was partly a sigh of relief — partly of regret.

Presently she murmured, as if communing with herself, rather than addressing me —

"So it has ever been through all this weary search for faith. Comfortable professions, but no sincerity — no consistent earnestness. Or, if I find the ardor and the devotion I had hitherto sought in vain — the awful zeal that seems to correspond with the sublimity of such realities — I hear, at once, that this is but the profane art of an accomplished actor, and that what

has thrilled and terrified me like the voice of a God, is only brazen impudence or gifted hypocrisy! O! is it thus that I am ever to be deceived and humiliated? — trusting, one by one, all the pretences of faith, and finding them worthless! — searching the peopled world in vain, for evidence that God is actually acknowledged among men!”

It is impossible to describe the pathos — the subdued, but profound grief — with which these words were pronounced. They penetrated my heart like a dirge, and so desolate did they represent her soul, that I could find no language adequate to answer her.

Meantime we reached her father's house.

“Miss Arlington,” said I, detaining her, and mastering my emotion, “I compassionate, though I may not appreciate, your unhappy experience. I am not surprised that you estimate my instructions so cheap, for you need a wiser guide than I to lead you through this labyrinth. No; do not interrupt me,— I ask no explanation. I am but a young man, little versed in the intricate mazes of the human heart, or in the subtle processes of the understanding. I fear that I have not the power to disenthral a mind like yours of the dreary doubts that subvert its peace,—since those doubts appear to have grown with the growth of your nature, and to have diffused themselves into the very texture of your reason. But my office is that of a comforter and a friend. Whatever my poor resources may avail, they are freely devoted to you. Shall I visit you to-morrow, and place them at your service?”

Remember, O, my friend ! that in primitive days, the simplicity and loving zeal of Christians exorcised the demons that defied all the ingenuity of the wise."

She was silent ; her hand rested more heavily upon my arm, as if her strength were failing.

The wintry moon, riding high in the bleak heavens, emerged, for an instant, from a mass of drifting clouds, and flung its sudden radiance across my companion's face.

How pale — how deathly — how desolate it was !

In that instant, a feeling, hitherto undefined — a sensation, which had long haunted the borders of my heart, without being discriminated or understood — became clear, and made itself acknowledged.

It was an impulse of unwonted and mysterious tenderness, that made me bend over that pale and afflicted face, and whisper —

" O, Miss Arlington ! confide in my friendship, if not in my wisdom ; let me console your heart, if I cannot liberate your mind ! "

She struggled to recover herself, but it was no calm voice that answered me.

" I *do* confide in your friendship, Mr. Chester, and in your wisdom, — O, you know not how much ! You are kind, very kind ; and, O ! — I thank you."

" And shall I come to-morrow ? "

" Alas ! no ; it could not be. Thank you, — good-night."

There were tears in her voice.

“Wait, Miss Arlington!” I exclaimed; “I do not understand you.”

“I mean — O, forgive him, Mr. Chester! — I mean — that my father is no longer your friend. And I would not have you cross this threshold to serve me, however wretched I may be! — Good-by! but never think that I — can forget — your kindness, or esteem you less.”

She vanished within the rich man’s door; and when it closed with its dull clang, and I heard the bolt shoot into its socket, it seemed to enclose — not her — but *me* — in a solitude that precluded converse — in a dungeon, from which light and hope fled away.

I turned, listlessly, into the silent street, where the lamps seemed to burn like tapers in a sepulchre.

The dull, cold clouds had again eclipsed the wintry moon. The wind breathed its dirge-like notes, — a dreary accompaniment to my fresh memories, and the wail of hopes too dear to live!

My solitary tread along the stony pavement, seemed less audible than the beating of my heart; and the gloom of the overclouded firmament, less oppressive than the polar darkness that settled on my spirit.

XXIV.

HOW I AM COMFORTED.

THE next day, it appeared that the scene at Dr. Screamer's church was making a sensation. It was a precious crumb for the gossiping mice to nibble. There were almost as many versions of the transaction as there have been critics on Shakspeare, and they displayed a marvellous ingenuity of *dissent* that might have qualified their authors for distinction in a more erudite field.

As I had anticipated, I found myself very disagreeably connected with the affair. My enemies prepared at once to make the most of my involuntary act, and certain members of Dr. Screamer's society, — who were too much excited to observe or remember the actual state of the case, or too bigoted to desire to render me justice — zealously seconded their efforts; and the report soon became nearly current, that I had maliciously “broken up” the revival meeting!

Certain edifying *scandal* was retailed in connection with this charge, in order that it might be duly

flavored for all sorts of appetites; and thus, within twelve hours, I was ticketed for as much notoriety as any decent mortal can covet!

What did I do in justification of myself?

Two things:

First, I wrote a card, explaining my actual connection with that disastrous service, to be inserted in the *Morning News* and the *Bubbleton Gazette*.

Secondly, I addressed a note to the revivalist. It was brief—pertinent—imperative. And the very next evening, to the surprise of everybody except myself, that obliging individual publicly vindicated me from all blame, as regarded the catastrophe of the previous night; and, moreover, bore the most emphatic testimony to the excellence of my character—a step in the *amende honorable* from which I could have excused him, it being a service which I could not reciprocate!

While occupied by these interesting proceedings, I had the pleasure of making a new acquaintance, in the person of one who bade fair to exercise that noble virtue we call PATIENCE, in no inconsiderable degree.

It was a large, cumbrous sort of a man, very languid in his movements, with a hopeless, leaden expression of countenance, and a doleful, drawling utterance, that forewarned you of infinite affliction.

He introduced himself as Mr. Saturnine Glum,—informed me that he was a widower, with four daughters, “all more or less diseased,”—that he

had been the most unhappy of men during the greater part of his life,—that he had recently moved to Bubbleton, where he hoped to secure a living as an apothecary,—and, lastly (to my horror), that he proposed connecting himself with my congregation.

“I hear,” pursued Mr. Saturnine Glum, with the simplicity of a master of torture, “that the society is getting badly divided, and that most of the people are getting dissatisfied with you; but that does n’t prevent me from making choice of your church, for my spiritual home. I’m used to trouble and trial, sir; I was born for it,—I was reared in it, and I expect little else until I shake off this mortal coil, as the Psalmist says!”

Mr. Glum paused, sighed, coughed, lifted up his eyes devoutly, and then continued:

“You will be glad to secure a sympathizing and intelligent friend, Mr. Castor—”

“*Chester*, if you please,” suggested I, correcting him.

“Ah, yes—as I was saying—you will be glad of a friend in the parish, at this unhappy period, who can sympathize with you, and counsel you, and keep you informed of the general state of affairs!”

I was speechless.

“I have had a very wide acquaintance among ministers,” pursued Mr. Glum, in his most doleful tone—as if it were a confession fitted to wring one’s heart—“and I have usually found them among the

most miserable of men, surrounded by trouble and trial, like myself ! But I've always made it a solemn duty to console and counsel them — poor servants of an ungrateful world ! — as I hope to console and counsel you."

In this strain, Mr. Glum continued to comfort me for about an hour.

At last he arose, and slowly prepared to take leave. Halting at the door, however, he added :

"I have n't heard you preach, yet, Mr. Castor, but I hope I shall like you — it's such a consolation to like a minister ! I trust you're a right solemn, *Gospel* preacher,—one that makes men feel how wicked the world is, how full of vanity and vexation all things are here below, and how desirable it is to sleep the sleep of the grave !— Very comforting thoughts are these, Mr. Castor, and highly becoming a young minister to indulge ! Well, we shall all be in church, next Sunday, if our lives are spared — me and my four daughters — (all more or less diseased) — and very likely I may send up a request for prayers. One likes to hear one's minister pray for the broken-hearted ; it's so pathetic and dreary-like !"

Pausing, again, at the foot of the stairs, and looking back at me with his leaden eyes, he groaned out this piece of intelligence :

"I've a very large collection of melancholy narratives, describing the most heart-rending accidents and the most cruel murders on record ! I will lend it to

you, it gives such a true picture of the world, and is so convenient, moreover, to illustrate Gospel sermons. Well, good-by, Mr. Castor, you will see me often, I dare say ! ”

And, at last, he actually went.

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XXV.

THE NIGHT-WALK.

ALL through the day succeeding the catastrophe at Dr. Screamer's church, and that last sad conference with Miss Arlington, my heart was darkened by the shadow of some impending sorrow, whose nature I tried in vain to define and anticipate. The troubles which had already revealed themselves — the web of vexatious cares in which I was actually involved — appeared trivial in comparison with what my heart foreboded.— I adopted the measures I have described in the last record, with the regularity and precision of mechanism, for they did not employ enough anxiety to flurry the feelings or agitate the judgment. My real concern was elsewhere, flowing deep and dark beneath all I did or said.

Even that promising acquaintance, Mr. Saturnine Glum, did not wholly withdraw my mind from its mournful abstraction, or divest my fancy of the sombre images with which it played. Mr. Glum's individuality was bold and prominent, but, at that particular time, my own mental scenery was too deeply

shaded to become a foil to his otherwise conspicuous qualities. Doubtless the death's head, that the wise Egyptians permitted to appear at their feasts, was impressive enough, as it grinned, satirically, upon the revellers; but, cast upon a hecatomb of death's heads, it would have secured but very little notice. (The discerning and charitable reader will make the most of this heathenish figure; Mr. Saturnine Glum, and his relations, are responsible for it!)

As regards my private interest in Miss Arlington, I do not intend troubling my readers.—At least, it is my desire to confine what *must* be said on that subject, to as narrow a compass as possible. If I have indiscreetly intimated, in some of the preceding pages, more than a man in my position ought to have confessed, I will now assume a double armor of prudence, and—to the disappointment and confusion of the young people of Scandalburgh—*rule out* all the love matters from this serious history: that is, so far as the predestined and inevitable action of two or three characters renders it practicable!

I have good cause for believing that certain light-minded persons, who, by a privilege of friendship, have looked over my shoulder while I was writing, have anticipated more than they will realize, in consequence of having assumed that I do business with the same species of capital employed by those transcendental novelists, of whom most young persons know quite as much as they ought. Let all such be forewarned, and betake themselves to more promising

reading; and let them reflect by the way, how much I should suffer, in the opinion of the grave and judicious, did I suffer the placid current of my narrative to swell into the furious and turbid stream of romance.

But all this — as unsophisticated readers may venture to think — is a little foreign from the matter in hand. It is the fault of those, however, who have seen fit to speculate, prematurely, about the issue of this trustworthy story.

I now resume :

Towards evening — still burdened by the mysterious sense of approaching calamity — I left my chamber, and sauntered forth into the town. I felt myself the object of a general, and by no means flattering, notice, for my explanations were not yet published, and I had not then been vindicated from Dr. Screamer's pulpit. Still, it was not the offensive notice I was conscious of eliciting that troubled me — I felt a quiet resentment and scorn of *that* so self-assuring as to give me little anxiety; but my mental vision was painfully scanning the horizon of probability, in hope of discerning what manner of evil it was whose portentous shadow made itself felt so vividly.

Half unconsciously, my steps took the direction of Mr. Arlington's store. I entered. That accomplished gentleman — whom I was no longer to consider my friend — was not there. He had been absent since nine o'clock. His eldest son, who gave me this information, was so curt and frigid in his manners that I felt little inclination to prolong the call.

Something had evidently happened.

Again in the street, the first person I recognized was Robert Fiscal. With a mock courtesy and a sardonic smile, he touched his hat, and moved triumphantly by. How significant that look and gesture were!

I paused at one of the corners, for an instant, to collect myself.

The Athenæum was near, and thither I directed my course. The only person I found there was Harry Hanson.

At sight of me, the good blacksmith elevated both his hands and his voice.

“Lord!” he exclaimed, using his habitual ejaculation, “Mr. Chester, I was just thinking of you. How do you stand it?”

And he wrung my hand in the most friendly manner.

“Stand what, Mr. Hanson?” I asked, a little absently.

“Why, the blow they’re making about the part you took in the revival meeting last night; — of course you’ve heard of it?”

“Yes; but I have taken means to correct the misapprehensions of people, as regards that; it will do me no real damage.”

“I’m right glad to hear you say so, Mr. Chester, for I had began to fear that — between the gossips, the bigots, and the knaves of our delectable community — you might find it hard to make headway.

Lord, sir ! to tell truth and shame the devil, I've felt a deal of concern for you, this many weeks, for it's generally understood that the pulpit you occupy is about the most *slippery* place this side of the Glaciers. And, ever since that terrible, terrible night you went with me through the storm to visit poor Bill Gorman, I've had a liking for you, stronger than I feel for most of the other gentlemen of the cloth. And then, Bill's poor widow and the little girl — how beautifully they talk about you !— you ought to hear how grateful they are ; and even Peppery — brave, snarling little Peppery — grows a bit softened toward you, I think ! Well, I guess you'll weather the gale, after all ; but, Lord ! you don't look very confident of the game, do you ? ”

And the blacksmith — who had stood earnestly wringing my hand, during the last minute — suddenly changed his tone and expression, and stared at me with the most commiserating look.

I tried to reässure him, however, and thanked him, warmly, for the friendly sentiments he had expressed.

“ I'll tell you what I have done,” said Harry Hanson, recovering his vivacity ; “ I have just been and joined your parish.”

“ Ah ! have you, indeed ? I'm very much gratified by hearing it, Mr. Hanson.”

“ Yes ; it's a new step for me, though — I have n't had much to do with churches, here in Bubbleton. They foster a religion that I don't, somehow, under-

stand or respect. The fashion of religion has changed, amazingly, Mr. Chester, since I was a boy and learned the Lord's Prayer from my mother's lips; but I must say that I like the old fashion the best — only as regards a few doctrines, where I think some of you liberals have made an improvement,—for I never could see, even when a child, how religion was made any more attractive by hitching on so many scare-crows, and torture-chambers, and hell-flames, and such like. Well, as I said, I'm coming to your church, at a venture."

"I hope you will see no cause to regret the step."

"I hope I shan't; but, Lord! it's all your doing, Mr. Chester, after all; and if I can serve *you*, I *know* I shan't regret it."

I thanked him again.

"Lord!" exclaimed the blacksmith, his face lighting up with sudden emotion, "it would never do for me to be a minister; I should always be blowing somebody up! — I could n't be imposed upon, as most of you seem to be.

"Now, I've got a poor devoted cousin, down in Connecticut," he continued, "who works harder than any man in his parish for the meagre salary of four hundred dollars, and even part of this sum, I believe, is paid in onions! I paid him a visit, last summer, and so got some knowledge of his affairs. He has a frugal wife, who exhausts her ingenuity in trying to clothe her seven children, as he exhausts *his* in devising means to feed and educate them. Yet I found that

the parish grumbled a great deal, because my cousin and his wife did not visit more. They live in a wretched shell of a house, where the rain pours into every room; but the parish think that it is all their minister ought to desire. The poor fellow's salary is always in arrears — meagre as it is, — and yet I know three of his parishioners who are accumulating property at the rate of two thousand dollars a year. — He is often called to the distance of twenty miles to attend somebody's funeral, and, nine cases in ten, is obliged to bear his own expenses, besides incurring a cold that disables him for several days, and, it may be, prevents his preaching the next Sunday. Such a case happened while I was there, and, Lord! how the parish fretted! and how they wondered that my cousin had n't more endurance! Zounds! how I wanted to preach to them myself; and, indeed, I *would* but for my poor cousin's remonstrance!"

I remembered a few cases equally aggravating, but was not in a mood to name them.

Thanking the blacksmith once more for the kind interest he had shown in my welfare, and feeling very deeply gratified by the "step" he had taken, I obeyed the restless spirit that possessed me, and betook myself again to the streets.

It was now nearly dark. The lights began to appear in the street-lamps and in the shops. A countryman — who had, apparently, spent the day in traffic, and had not made the best use of his gains — was driving furiously along in his market wagon, lashing

his team, and singing a rude song. A pair of Italian minstrels — then rare enough to be considered novelties in Bubbleton — tramped wearily by with their baize-covered organ, followed by a tumultuous army of excited and wondering boys. A group of politicians stood beneath a grocer's awning, angrily discussing President Jackson's treatment of the United States Bank. A pale and sickly young clerk, with a cough on his lungs, and a great deal of foppery in his dress, was issuing from a house to execute his night's task; and an anxious, care-worn woman was standing in the door, exhorting him to be careful of his health, and to come home as soon as the store should be closed.

How distinctly I remember all these things, associated as they are with the thrilling experience of that night!

I walked on — scarcely conscious whither — until I found myself in the neighborhood of Mr. Arlington's house.

Just then, the sudden stroke of a bell sounded over the city. It came from the lofty tower of Dr. Screamer's church, summoning the people to prayer and propitiation. With what an imperative and terrific voice, that solitary herald — speaking, with its iron tongue, through the dark and wintry air — seemed to address the frivolous and mercenary town! To my sensitive ear, it assumed every tone that can thrill and agitate a human heart. It was first a solemn proclamation,—spoken loud, and free to the

listening night. Then it persuaded, entreated, with softening notes that lingered, melodiously, on the ear. Then it warned, with accents of growing severity and earnestness. From warnings, it mounted into denunciations — thundered forth rapid and wrathful, as if bursting from the lips of an incensed divinity, — such imperious indignation as might almost startle the guilty dead ! And then, it seemed to change, once more, and assume a dirge-like lamentation, as it hung, sighing and mourning, on the air : and *Why will ye die ? — why will ye die ?* was henceforth the burden of the bell's low, despairing cry.

I pensively approached Mr. Arlington's dwelling, walking on the opposite side of the way, and trying in vain to determine why I was there at all.

A horse and chaise stood at the door, and while I was trying to identify them, their owner appeared on the threshold, and I recognized the leading physician of Bubbleton. Mr. Arlington had accompanied him to the door, and detained him for a few minutes on the steps. The rich man stood in dressing-gown and slippers, and the expression of his face, as it was revealed by the light of the hall-lamp, was severe and serious.

"The greatest prudence is necessary, and time only can determine the result," were the ambiguous words of the physician, as he entered the chaise, and drove off. Mr. Arlington softly closed the door, and disappeared.

"No longer my friend !" murmured I, almost aloud ; and what a mysterious melancholy there was

in the thought. And still the bell moaned through the wintry air — as if forbidden to change that plaintive tone — *Why will ye die? — why will ye die?*

Trouble had invaded the home of the worldly, epicurean Christian, and I trembled to think *who* was its probable messenger.

Scanning the ample face of the mansion, I perceived that it was not illuminated as usual. Only a single ray of light shone from the spacious parlors, whose obscurity was contrasted with the splendors of those in the adjoining building, where a gay party was being given, and from which came, frequent and free, the sounds of laughter and music. One chamber alone in the afflicted house, gave token of occupancy. There the light stole softly through the closely-drawn curtains, and figures were seen moving to and fro, with the cautious and solemn air of spectres. Within that solitary room were concentrated the sympathies and anxieties of the household; and to whom that chamber was appropriated I knew but too well!

I stood motionless on the sidewalk, gazing up at those windows past which the dim figures glided, and feeling the cruelty of the fate that debarred me from their sad company. I stood — waiting, I believe, for the beating of my heart to subside, or for some definite purpose to appear from the chaos of my feelings and thoughts.

I remember that many people passed — hurried on by their various impulses and pursuing their different objects — and that some of them paused, and gave me

an inquiring stare ; but these things scarcely diverted my attention an instant from the gloomy house, with its saddening memories and its thrilling suggestions.

It was not long ere the door was again opened, and a female figure came forth, and moved rapidly down the street. I soon overtook this person, whom I addressed, in as firm a tone as I could command :

“ Miss Lark, can you tell me what has happened at Mr. Arlington’s ? ”

The sentimental young lady screamed at the first sound of my voice — (after the nervous manner of the old-story heroines, only not terrific enough to have brought any one to her rescue) — and then paused and looked at me, with a mingling of grief and wonder.

“ O, Mr. Chester ! don’t *you* know ? ” she exclaimed.

“ Know what ? I have heard nothing — seen no one ; what do you mean ? ”

“ Why that *she* is ruined — mad — dying ! O my poor, dear friend ! ”

And the tears choked the poor girl’s voice, and gushed over her face in a shower of grief.

I did not speak, — I scarcely breathed, the throbbing of my heart was so loud and fierce ; and into my brain leaped such a torrent of blood that I felt dizzy and blind.

“ And you know nothing of this ! why, your name has been upon her lips, dear, proud girl ! in her delirium — ”

“Stop, Miss Lark!” cried I, between anger and a mad, hopeless joy; “you are not aware what you say; — never repeat those words, as you love your friend!”

And I left her.

In an instant later, I was standing by Mr. Arlington’s threshold, which I was never more to pass as a friend. I rang — gently, as I thought,—but my hand was agitated, and the report of the bell came sharp to my ear, like a voice shrill with rage and wrong.

A servant, to whom I was well known, admitted me, after a long delay. I asked for Mr. Arlington, and walked into the parlor that was lighted by the solitary taper. Its faint beams fell full upon a large mirror, which startled me by the haggard image it reflected.

I sat down, and attempted to reduce my wild sensations to order. But the murmur of voices above swept over my heart like a storm. My nature was adrift, and no longer obeyed the helm of reason.

Meantime the minutes flew — my request was not answered,—I was still alone. At last, a step was audible on the stairs,—the servant appeared — with a note. I read it, at a glance,—crumpled it in my nervous grasp,—and, pressing down the gushing tenderness and the sunny hope, left thus the house which had been first to welcome me, on my arrival in Bubbleton.

No, in the rich, affable, and influential merchant,—

in the comfortable, compromising, yet imperious parishioner — I had no longer a friend. And yet, never had the friendship of this man appeared half so precious as now, when all hope of regaining it was abandoned :

For when Selfishness pleads in the name of Love, in the enchanted temple of our Youth, how hard it is to perform the vow we have made to God, and hold our upward course, serene and true !

XXVI.

A SYMPATHIZING VISITOR.

IN reviewing the last record, I have grown a little apprehensive, lest the more critical of my readers may have discerned a flaw in the resolution, so gratuitously avowed, only a few pages back. "Did you not promise to abstain from all details of merely private interest?" I fancy some irritable Uncle Roland demanding; "and did you not voluntarily pledge yourself to rule out all love matters from your history? How well you have kept your word with us, let those readers judge who have read the last half-dozen pages." This Uncle Roland we will suppose to have spent all the leisure hours of a long life in reading the most intolerable fictions; and an author can pardon some irritability and tartness in one whose credulity has so often betrayed him. "Now, a clergyman," puts in Uncle Roland, argumentatively, "ought to fulfil *his* pledges before all other men," &c. At the end of which homily, some sententious American Caxton — snuffing the classic air of Cambridge — will add, with a gesture of faultless pro-

priety, "Fidelity is the crowning virtue of the historian." And the result will be, that a prejudice will be conceived against me, at this interesting stage of my narrative, unless I shelter myself behind the ensuing paragraph :

Be it known, then, that the pledge so confidently adduced against me, is so equivocally worded as to admit of two contrary meanings, either of which may be assumed, according to the whim or interest of the author ! This delightful art of "paltering in a double sense" — though represented by the great dramatist as being practised by rather a disreputable class of persons — has been rendered eminently respectable, in our day, by the example of a large number of disinterested politicians, who have found it highly convenient in satisfying the anxieties of their constituents.

If, therefore, I have raised expectations which it is not convenient or possible to gratify, with respect to the course of this history, I shall take refuge from the shafts of censure within this mighty national precedent, and so pursue my task unscathed.

The scenes last described occurred on Friday evening.

It was not until a week from the ensuing Sunday that I again saw Mr. Arlington, or heard more than vague rumors from his family.

I shall describe, later, under what circumstances I again met the rich parishioner, and relate what ensued

upon that meeting. At present, I must allude to some intervening transactions.

The next Sunday — as I had anticipated — proved an exciting day. My card had been published, and my vindication had been pronounced in Dr. Screamer's church. There was a reversion of public feeling in my favor, which was not without its influence upon the parish. It encouraged my friends — perhaps multiplied them out of the ranks of the indifferent — and embittered my enemies. The church was thronged, during both services — strangers forming a large contribution to the audiences. Never was it the fortune of a preacher to address less devout assemblies. I was not heard as a minister of Christ, but as a man of eventful fortunes, who had provoked the gossip of community, and acquired a sudden notoriety. A sad, leaden consciousness of this fact weighed down my spirits, and rendered the labor of the day a painful, monotonous task.

The two recent acquisitions to the parish — Harry Hanson and Saturnine Glum — attended these services. The latter was accompanied by his valetudinary daughters, who, by the by, did not exhibit the sickly appearance I had been led to anticipate, but appeared as fresh and healthful as any girls I knew. Dispirited and gloomy as my mind was, that day, I thought it not unlikely that I might secure the apothecary's approval. In this trivial expectation, I was, however, disappointed; for he spoke to me as I was quitting the church, in the afternoon, and said he

was sorry not to have heard "one of those Gospel lamentations on the folly of life and the desirableness of death, which are so gratifying to the bereaved soul!"

"Have patience, O Saturnine Glum!" thought I, with bitter emotion; "perhaps I may yet realize your expectations — if I remain in Bubbleton!"

It was one evening, during that week, that, returning from a visit, about eight o'clock, I found a stranger waiting for me in the study. — He was a small, thoughtful-looking man, apparently about thirty-five years of age. His countenance, as I soon discovered, was susceptible of a great variety of expressions, but that which appeared most habitual was a kind of cynical melancholy, that betrayed the perversion of a nature, originally far above the ordinary level of human excellence.

He introduced himself as the editor of an anti-slavery newspaper, recently commenced in one of the New England cities. He was now canvassing the country for subscribers, and — having a few friends in Bubbleton, and hearing that I was not inimical to the cause — he had called to make my acquaintance and secure my support.

"How do you like Bubbleton?" demanded the visitor, after he had stated his business, and I had promised him my assistance.

I gave him to understand, in a few words, that my attachment to Bubbleton was not of the most ardent nature.

Looking at me, keenly, as I spoke, he rejoined, with an impetuosity then quite unaccountable :

“ Ah ! I see how it is ; the reäction has commenced ; the mine is being sprung,—you won’t remain with this parish a year : —to your credit be it said.”

“ You know the parish, I should infer,” said I.

“ Yes ; no man can know it better ; I have made its acquaintance to my sorrow, and to the sorrow of those dearest to me.”

“ You have lived in Bubbleton ? ”

“ Yes, as pastor of your parish : my name is Stringent ! ”

I grasped my predecessor’s hand, and thanked him for the pleasure I derived in seeing him.

Brother Stringent was affected to tears by my cordiality.

“ Ah, Brother Chester,” said he, “ you receive me as a brother in misfortune : I am, indeed, a weary, disappointed man ; and you, young as you are, hold the key to all my weariness and disappointment. Let us sit here, in the light of your evening fire, and talk it over.”

As he spoke thus, all that was harsh and cynical in his look, or voice, vanished away ; and a sadness, worthy of a broken heart, invested his expressive features, and sighed in his softened speech.

Brother Stringent remained with me two days. — During this visit, he canvassed Bubbleton, saw most

of his old friends and late parishioners, and related to me several incidents of his ministerial career.

These revelations afforded a picture of the ministry not to be contemplated, without an emotion bordering on despair; and yet they accorded so truthfully with my own recent experience, that I could neither regard them as fictions, nor scarcely as exceptional instances of hardship and injustice. After having heard his narrative, I expressed neither surprise nor regret when Brother Stringent informed me that he had given up the ministry.

XXVII.

INCIDENTS OF BROTHER STRINGENT'S MINISTRY.

IN justice to this man's memory, I think I ought to transfer to these pages some portion of his professional history,—especially as his connection with the Bubbleton parish identified many of his severest trials with mine, and proved the turning-point in his career.

I shall attempt to present this reminiscence in Brother Stringent's own language, as accurately as it can be recalled at this distance of time, and with the help of notes preserved in my diary.

“I commenced preaching in Western —— ———.*
I was young, ardent, and, I believe, as disinterested

* The author desires to intimate here, that he is ready to specify more particularly the scene of Brother Stringent's early labors, should any person require proof of the absolute correctness of the statements. But the indignant sensitiveness which the people of this region have already manifested, whenever any allusion has been made to their faults, renders it desirable that his inevitable mention of them in these Records, be couched in such vague terms as to baffle the discernment of his readers, and so avert from the delinquents the censure they so reasonably dread. So far as in us lies, let us live peaceably with all men.

as most of the men I have known. I was hopeful—even enthusiastic; but my expectations were rational. My pecuniary anticipations were limited to the comforts of a frugal home, and the means of pursuing those studies which my profession imposed upon me. My hopes of fame were restricted to the approval and affection of the congregations whom I might be appointed to serve.

“The societies of our faith in that region were then few, widely separated, and most imperfectly organized. Their pecuniary ability was not great—compared with that of some other sects—but it might have enabled them to do vastly more for the encouragement of their ministers than was actually done. The nominal salary of a preacher who gave his whole time to a society, was two hundred dollars; though it rarely happened that more than three-fourths of this sum was collected. Itinerant ministers fared still worse. If one of these received three or four dollars for a Sunday’s service, which cost him seventy miles’ travel, he had reason to consider himself fortunate. It oftener happened that he received less, and, perhaps, nothing more tangible than the thanks of those to whom he had revealed the impartial Gospel of Christ.—The idea had become pretty generally propagated, that it was wrong to pay for preaching.—Some spiritually-minded man had made the discovery, that the Gospel—being infinitely above silver and gold—became degraded by being associated, in any manner, with so gross a thing as money. To pay a minister was to

materialize the spiritual verities he proclaimed. His office was too ethereal and too divine to admit of his being recompensed for his toils, or ministered to in his wants, like ordinary men! It was a pity that so charming an idea — which flattered the clergy while it profited the laity — should have been marred by a practical fallacy, which its advocates could never remove. The fallacy appeared in the perplexing fact, that, while ministers were declared superior to the weakness of deserving money, in requital of their labors, they were not released from the obligation to pay it, in requital of benefits received from others!

“But this was not the greatest evil that characterized the region of which I am speaking.— The novel features of our theology, and the imperfection of our religious organizations, together with the perverse misrepresentations of hostile sects, led many persons to connect themselves, temporally, with our societies, whose characters imparted to our views little credit, and whose notions of preaching were such as few Christians would be inclined to adopt. This class of persons knew no Gospel except such as was casually hinted at, in the energy of theological debate. They recognized no preaching that was not controversial. Satirical expositions of the weak points of the current faith, were their special delight. And when a pertinent quotation from Holy Writ, pronounced with zealous emphasis and conscious triumph, promised to demolish the strong towers of some belligerent sect, they seemed to realize, for the first time, what a bless-

ing it is to have God's will plainly written in a book ! But if a preacher declined leading a sectarian crusade, and ventured to intimate that all controversy was but a means to an end, which is personal holiness,—if he presumed to scrutinize their characters, in the searching light which Christianity casts upon human life — their disapprobation was quick and vehement, and they withdrew at once their sympathies and their support.

“I began my work by engaging to preach, one-fourth of the time, to a small society in Ducksburch. The engagement was formed for an indefinite period, and was made contingent on my securing employment for the remainder of the time, in some of the neighboring towns. I was to be paid three dollars a Sunday, and a generous member of the society offered — as I was then unmarried — to give me a home in his family, free of charge. Our meetings were held in a schoolhouse.

“It was under these flattering auspices that I began to preach the Gospel.

“Fixing my home and post-office address in Ducksburch, and turning my friend's parlor into a study — to the no small annoyance of his housekeeper and the astonishment of visitors,—I labored with that ardor which only the first years of manhood can know, and only the loftiest purposes inspire.

“I felt all one's youthful zeal for my faith; and amazed the Reverend Dr. Gamaliel — a proud, mature man of forty — by paying him a controversial visit,

and summoning him to defend certain views, which he had recently put forth in a funeral discourse. Three neighboring villages shared with Ducksburgh the benefit of my ministry, and furnished me with attentive and complimentary audiences. To and from these places, which were distant ten and fourteen miles from my home, I uniformly walked — for the most imperative of reasons,— planning discourses and mapping out the future, by the way.

“My courage and zeal lasted until the small sum of money, with which I had begun my public career, became exhausted, and my perishable raiment showed signs of vanishing away. Then I suddenly withdrew my observation from the general interests of humanity, and concentrated it upon my particular person. The spectacle was more impressive than animating. Practical philosophers have noted how rapidly human resolutions collapse, when there is an exhaustive leak in one's pocket! I have seen the time when I could have maintained, that current money possesses the greatest galvanic power under heaven.

“Not a dollar had I received from any quarter, since my settlement in Ducksburgh, and my wants were becoming manifest. In this dilemma, I took a zealous friend into my confidence, and begged the benefit of his counsel. He, in turn, made a statement of the case to his wife, and she to certain other women of the society; and thus a remedy was devised. It appeared that my zealous friend had business relations with a tailor, who dictated masculine fashions to

the credulous people of the next village, and with whom an arrangement was made to induct me into a new suit of clothes.

“Now you will not in the nature of the case suppose, either that Ducksburgh was as fashionable as Broadway, or that I was as fastidious as a dandy ; but certain it is that any civilized community would marvel, at this day, and any civilized man above a circus-rider despair, at sight of the suit that was thus furnished me, by the combined genius of the society and of the aforesaid tailor. The coat I afterwards heard described as a pepper-and-salt fabric, but of what material the pants and vest were made, defies conjecture. I only know that they were striped and colored, in a manner that would have drawn plaudits from a savage, and that suggested at once their proper destination, namely, to the missionary chest.

“This highly clerical suit, however, I actually wore two Sundays—in part from necessity, and in part, also, from insensibility to its grotesque effect. But, happening to attend a conference, where I met several ministers of more cultivated taste, I was made aware of my ridiculous appearance. I cast off the objectionable garb, and a kind brother became my security for a more becoming suit. Still the Ducksburgh people resented my treatment of their gift.—Their confidence in me rapidly declined after they beheld me irreproachably attired. I labored with them during a considerable portion of eight months,

but received nothing more in remuneration of my services.

“In the other villages where I had preached — as I was given to understand, ‘to good acceptance’ — for more than a dozen Sundays, I did not receive the value of the shoe-leather I had worn out. Yet several of my constant hearers, in these places, were worth property that was reckoned by thousands; and I have often heard them speak of the great love they felt for the ‘cause,’ without visibly blushing for their meanness!

“In one of the towns just alluded to, was a merchant, who had manifested an unusual interest in my services. He had urged me, in the most flattering terms, to establish a series of meetings,—had circulated my appointments with much apparent zeal, and declared himself a firm supporter of the cause. His house had been opened for my entertainment, and all that I saw in his home indicated a liberal disposition. This man was reputed to be rich, and the style of his living certainly confirmed the report. It happened that I had contracted a debt of seven dollars, at a book-binder’s, in this place; and the idea occurred to me, that, having preached some four Sundays, for which I had as yet received nothing, I would hint to the people the propriety of paying that debt, in requital of my labors. Accordingly, I spoke to my friend, the merchant, about my plan. You will admire the cool indifference of his answer:

“ ‘Indeed, sir, I do not know what others may say

to your proposition, but as for myself, *I find it all I can do to pay my own debts !*’

“ And this man, positively, never paid me a shilling !

“ These incidents would not merit notice, were they isolated cases. But they accurately illustrate a characteristic of that section of country, at the time to which I allude, and offer no exaggerated estimate of the trials to which ministers of our faith were liable. Nor should I infer that there has been much improvement, even yet, as regards many of the towns — judging from all that I hear of the poverty of those who labor in that ungrateful region.

“ O, Brother Chester ! if all the true servants of God could be summoned, in their glory, before us, I believe that the patient heroism of those obscure pioneers, would rival the brightness of the saints we have canonized ! ” *

* The following statement by a Presbyterian minister of Indiana, which is copied from a recent number of the *Centre Christian Herald*, shows that Brother Stringent’s experience is not without a parallel in our time : perhaps it may be but fair to consider it an “ extreme case ” ?

“ We live on less than two hundred dollars per annum, including horse-keeping and travelling expenses ; and my travelling in a year is not less than three thousand miles. I have to go to a neighboring wood and fell down the trees, chop them into ten or twelve feet logs, hitch my horse to them, drag them to the house, chop, saw and split them for stove-fuel, and then, after preaching *two sermons* a week, riding most weeks fifty or sixty miles, teaching Sabbath-school, riding three miles to post-office and store, &c. — even *then* I am accused by my brethren of ‘ *doing nothing but riding about and reading my books,*’ and told I ‘ *might work a little, and earn a part of my living !* ’ ”

XXVIII.

BEARING THE LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.

“AFTER leaving Ducksburgh,” resumed Brother Stringent, “I flattered myself that a more promising field was offered me in Bunkerville. Bunkerville is situated just within the borders of an adjoining state. It is a romantic village, of about fifteen hundred inhabitants, bounded by finely-wooded hills, and washed by one of the noblest of our rivers. The leading employment of the place is lumbering; and, in the spring season, when the river is swollen by the melted snow and abundant rain, the Sabbath is practically abrogated for several weeks, and the whole place becomes a scene of petty traffic, boisterous labor, and profane uproar.

“In this village, the doctrines of our faith had been cherished by a few worthy families during many years, but by the community at large, they were little understood,—never having enjoyed the advantages of a settled and permanent ministry. My settlement in the place was viewed as an experiment, since it was considered uncertain whether there were people enough

interested in the diffusion of our sentiments, to afford me an adequate support. The beginning of my course, however, was quite promising. There seemed to be a great interest awakened in regard to our meetings. The novelty of the doctrines advanced drew a crowd of hearers, that completely filled the large court-house, where our services were held. Favorable expressions were elicited from many of the leading men of the village. Generous offers, of a pecuniary nature, were tendered. In short, such was my inexperience, and such my hopefulness of disposition, that I anticipated wonderful things as the result of my labors.

“But this conceited expectation did not survive the experience of six months. I was soon made to realize how transient and unreliable all this apparent interest was. Having heard a statement of my faith, and seen an inventory of its evidences, and having had their torpid sensibilities exhilarated by the excitement of controversy, the majority of my early hearers appeared to conclude that no further advantage was to be realized from my preaching,—especially as I had, more than once, turned aside from the fruitful themes of debate, to urge upon my frivolous auditors, the necessity of conforming their *characters* to the divine principles of the faith I proclaimed.

“I had begun to observe, with disappointment and despondency, a gradual decline of interest that threatened to terminate, at no distant period, the services so hopefully commenced, when one of my most zealous

friends obligingly resolved to give me the benefit of his counsel.

“ ‘I think,’ said he, ‘you’d better give us a little more *doctrine*, and leave the practical part of the faith till the people get better *grounded*. I notice that everybody likes to hear our doctrines preached,—even the irreligious seem to enjoy them, they are so animating, so consoling, so glorious. But your practical sermons—though *I* like them, myself—don’t somehow take so well, with the major part of the congregation. I observe that some are quite restless, under such sermons as cut too deep; and, when the meeting is over, they go out shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads, as if worried by the sting of some truth you had darted into their consciences.

“ ‘Now, Brother Stringent, a horse flinches from the harness that galls him, and a man avoids the preacher who gives him a sore conscience.—It’s the nature of both animals to do so. How shall we manage to retain their services?—for dispense with them, we cannot. With the horse, we can come to an understanding, by softening his collar and reducing his load; or, by an exercise of arbitrary power, compel him to serve us on our own terms. But the man is the more enlightened and the more stubborn animal,—the thistle-eating quadruped is no match for him, with respect to wilfulness, and the longest-tailed peacock can give one no idea of his conceit.—Him we must prudently conciliate,—we must touch his faults gingerly, and, as it were, by accident—not permit-

ting him to see the hand that wounds him,—and suffering the bitterness of judgment to season the Gospel feast, only in the proportion of an ounce of pill to a ton of sugar!’

“As I appeared somewhat restive under this advice, and seemed ready to controvert the principle it involved, my friend—with the air of a man confident of the security of his position—began to attack me with facts.

“‘There’s Judge Birch,’ said he, ‘a man who admired you unspeakably, the first six weeks, and offered to give us fifty dollars toward the erection of a church. Now he’s off—huffy as a Turk; and the Catholics will have the benefit of his money. What a pity you should have given that temperance harangue, just as the judge was recovering from that scandalous train, and when he knew the thing was fresh in everybody’s mind! It’s true, you hit the nail on the head, but then the nail split the pillar—there’s the trouble! The judge has withdrawn, and with him, half a dozen friends—the Poppies, the Dallies, and old Simon Meadows—people whom we can ill afford to lose.

“‘Then there’s old Mr. Abraham Brass, who used to sit so erect, with his crooked cane under his chin, and his mouth wide open with the eagerness of his interest,—you’ve driven him off by that terribly sharp sermon on profanity. He says you meant him, and that everybody knows you did, and declares he

won't be *blowed up* for his faults, before the whole village, by any man.

“ ‘Then, again, there’s Miss Cordelia Pinafore, whose voice was such an acquisition to the choir, and who had such a curious way of looking at the young men over the top of her fan,— we’ve lost her, too, because you saw fit to preach about vanity, and to lash frivolous people pretty freely with your whips of satire.

“ ‘You’ve made a mistake, Brother Stringent; — you should have grounded these people more firmly in the *faith*, before venturing to attack their vices and foibles. You’ll never make a successful fisher of men, until you learn to cover your naked hook with some more alluring bait!’

“ As this counsel commended itself neither to my judgment nor my conscience — plausibly and forcibly as it was urged — my course continued unchanged, and our prospects did not improve.

“ During my residence in Bunkerville, I was frequently invited to preach, for a single Sunday, in some of the neighboring towns, or settlements. A compliance with these invitations involved a great deal of travel and no inconsiderable expense; and it rarely happened that any remuneration was offered, or thought of. The invitations were regarded as highly complimentary, and the preacher was supposed to be the obliged party!

“ An account of one of these expeditions will afford

you some idea of the comforts and rewards that usually attended them :

“Thirty miles from Bunkerville, there was a settlement called Spring Rapids. Here, as I had often been assured, lived a devout believer of our faith, in the person of an old lumber-merchant, named Gingshang. This old man had earnestly desired that I might come and spend a Sunday with him, and preach the Gospel in his neighborhood : and finally I made arrangements to gratify his wish.

“I chose the last day of a beautiful week in September for the journey, and took into my carriage a member of my congregation, to serve as companion and guide ; for I had learned that the road lay through a lonely tract of forest land, and was neither direct nor plain.

“At home, the travelling was excellent ; but as we left the cultivated country, and directed our course through the new settlements, we found the roads anything but comfortable.—Composed of a mass of soft clay — saturated with water, and cut into furrows by the heavy carts of the lumbermen — a more laborious highway can scarcely be imagined. We rode, in the constant fear of either breaking the carriage, or seeing the horse flounder, hopelessly, in the mire.

“Already I had repented of having undertaken the journey, when we entered upon a turnpike, that extended, for three miles, through an unbroken pine wood. I can give you no worthy impression of the horrors of this road. I gave the reins to my compan-

ion, and, leaving the carriage to his guidance, scrambled along a half-decayed hedge, which had been formed by fallen trees, at the opening of the road. Relieved as the vehicle then was, it proved too great a burden for the poor horse. He repeatedly fell, in his efforts to draw it through the mire. At last I was obliged to wade into the swampy abyss, and relieve the wheels of the ponderous mass of clay they had accumulated.

“The day was more than half spent before we emerged into the next clearing, where we stopped for refreshments. It was yet sixteen miles to Spring Rapids, and we began to doubt our ability to reach our destination before night should set in. My companion — a nervous old gentleman, who had a particular dread of wolves — became very restless at the thought of traversing that desolate region after night-fall.

“We hurried on, as fast as the nature of the road and the condition of the horse would admit. It was late in the evening when we reached the lumber-merchant’s habitation, which we found to be a comfortable dwelling, standing near a saw-mill, and nearly surrounded by pine woods.

“Mr. Ginshang proved to be a fat, florid old gentleman, who received us with a most assuring smile of hospitality. But his companion — a tall, stern-looking matron, who held a severer faith — looked upon us with no favor. She engaged me in controversy, at once, and, when arguments failed her, re-

sorted to a kind of language more abusive than convincing.

“The conflict was protracted to a late hour, before it occurred to the zealous lady that we might be pardoned, under the circumstances, for feeling more interest in her pantry than in her creed. The reluctant supper appeared about midnight, and the labors of the day terminated after another hour’s discussion.

“I was awakened, in the morning, by the sound of rain, beating furiously against my window.— Looking out, I saw the fields half deluged with water, and the sky dense with clouds. It was the autumnal storm; and it continued all through the day, without abatement.

“At the hour of service, the lumber-merchant— providing each of us with an umbrella, and bearing two psalm-books under his arm— led the way to the place of worship. It was a schoolhouse, built on the border of the pine woods, and standing in the shadow of the colossal trees.— The wailing of the storm through the lofty pines, furnished the only music we could obtain for the occasion; for the old lumber-merchant, after most persevering efforts to pitch a tune— finding that nobody’s voice came to his assistance— tumbled down the scale, in sudden alarm at his own melody, and closed the psalm-book in despair.

“Twenty or thirty hard-featured backwoodsmen, drenched to the skin, assembled in the course of the forenoon, and I talked to them, from the Scriptures, about two hours— with what effect I never learned.

One of my hearers lived in a distant part of the town, and at his earnest solicitation, and in the hope that the weather might become more propitious, I was persuaded to appoint a service in his neighborhood, for Monday evening.

“At sunset, the rain ceased, and the sky became clear. After another protracted debate with the lady of the house, I retired, with the hope of pleasant weather for the morrow. The storm, however, awoke before morning, with all its vigor, and we drove, the next day, to the place of my appointment, through torrents of rain and mazes of mire.

“Monday evening set in with Egyptian darkness, almost impassable roads, and the storm, whose violence had not at all abated. Yet, by the friendly aid of lanterns and umbrellas, and at the sacrifice of some rustic finery, a considerable congregation was assembled — composed, in part, of females, whose zeal, or curiosity, had prompted them to brave the terrors of the night. While I marvelled at their resolution, I was very grateful for their presence — especially as some of them were tolerable singers, and lent their voices to the interest of the service. I have seldom preached with more energy or feeling than on this occasion. The tones of the storm beating without, and the eager attention of those obscure hearers, who had defied the inclemency of the night, and travelled, perhaps, several miles, that they might hear the Gospel; — and the thought, moreover, of the priceless value of divine truth to the souls of men, everywhere,

and especially to those whose lot is hard and whose opportunities are few — inspired my zeal to an unwonted degree, and called forth all the power and persuasiveness of my nature.

“After the meeting had broken up, a woman, who bore on her features, the signs of years of labor and trouble, and whose husband, as I subsequently learned, was dissipated and unkind — came to me, weeping violently, and thanking me for the comfort I had imparted, in broken language that went to my heart. And the belief that I had spoken comfort to one unblest spirit — toiling and grieving on this waste-place of life, and neither perceiving the beauty of earth nor sharing the hopes of heaven — was the recompense I received for this journey.

XXIX.

CLIPPING THE EAGLE'S WINGS.

“THE following spring terminated my residence in Bunkerville. My congregations had been declining, in numbers and interest, during several months, and when the rafting season came, it put a period to our unfortunate meetings.

“My want of success was attributed to the general complaint that my preaching was too pointed, and that I failed to *ground* my hearers in the great doctrines of the Bible.

“This, too, is the standing charge against me in Bubbleton, as you have probably learned. I am not prudent enough, I know, to be a successful minister. I can't temporize with people. I can't flatter, and compromise, and whip the guilty men over the shoulders of the Babylonians, after Mr. Downy's fashion, at the Plush-street Church. My plain, untutored sincerity has always been getting me into trouble. I suppose I could scarcely preach a discourse to any congregation, without irritating somebody's sensitive-

ness — the habit of plain-dealing has become so confirmed in me.

“ My last trouble in Bunkerville was experienced in trying to collect what money was due me.

“ I was astonished at the ingenious devices by which men contrived to withhold the sums they had promised to pay.

“ One man brought me a load of unmarketable wood, which I neither desired nor could dispose of, in payment of a claim of five dollars, which ought to have been met with money. Another, who had subscribed ten dollars, after paying me half the sum, deliberately informed me that the remainder was subscribed simply *as an example of liberality* for others — ‘not that he intended to pay it, for, really, he could not afford it!’

“ Another still, with an air of grand unconcern, told me that his subscription was made contingent on the success of our undertaking, and that, as I had notoriously failed to sustain myself, or realize the expectations of the people, he did not feel bound to fulfil his engagement.

“ It was neither the first nor the last time that I was made to realize, how loosely pecuniary obligations hang upon many men, if contracted in favor of a minister. If they owe nobody but their preacher, they are at rest. He will not prosecute or dun them, as any other creditor would; and they take advantage of his peculiar position and relations, to stretch his

patience to its utmost tension, or deprive him of his earnings entirely. Their course is not merely unjust, it is cowardly and mean.

“I have known ministers utterly disqualified for their duties, for weeks and weeks, by this culpable neglect on the part of their societies; and I have known the very people most indifferent to their pastor's rights, and most neglectful of his claims upon them, to complain the loudest of any failure he might commit in consequence of the embarrassments they had forced upon him!

“I will not expatiate upon my ministry in Bubbleton.

“From what you must have heard concerning me, you will have acquired a tolerably fair impression of my embarrassments and difficulties. I do not claim that I have always pursued the wisest course, but I always acted from my convictions.

“I suppose there are ministers—of longer and more varied experience—who might have managed this parish; but I am at a loss to imagine what methods they could have adopted, consistent with a proper discharge of their responsibilities.

“I found most of the people in the parish leaning on the abstractions of faith, and utterly indifferent to the demands of the passing moment. Consoling themselves with the promises of God, they were unmindful of their personal responsibilities. Entranced by the glowing prospect of futurity, they abandoned the present to the power of evil, and forgot that man must

become the co-laborer of God, before the felicity of the universe can be realized.

“I endeavored to make them conscious of their error.

“I asserted that the kingdom of holiness and love we anticipate, would never descend to bless passive and idle souls; but that we must mount into its blessed atmosphere, by lopping off our worldliness, and winging our noblest powers with virtuous endeavors.

“I maintained that a faith that opened all the possible glories of futurity to our sight, without quickening our manliness and exalting our aims, failed to influence us as it ought; and that we were not worthy to see all the goodness of God pass before us, unless, like Moses, we were willing to labor in his service — helping to lead our brethren out of bondage into the Canaan of promise.

“I reminded them that no *drunkard* could enter that beautiful realm which our faith disclosed, and that the *enslaver* could not carry his chains or scourges there; and told them that the sooner we put Intemperance and Slavery out of the world, with all their Tartarean satellites, the sooner the gates of the millenium would open to our knock.

“I hoped that the parish would respond to these views, or at least tolerate them; but I was not so fortunate.

“Some there were who stared at me, in wonder, as if I had unfolded a new Gospel; while others regarded

me as a mad fanatic, charged with enough combustion to blow up the nation !

“ And so, with the consciousness of another failure, and a deeper sense of the blind selfishness of man, I resigned my charge, and departed from Bubbleton. When will you do likewise ? ”

XXX.

THE END OF A TROUBLED MINISTRY.

I MADE no reply to Brother Stringent's abrupt interrogatory, except, perhaps, by some such doleful, elongated look as the face is liable to assume, when some opaque shadow drifts across the perspective of Hope, and we say to our defeated spirit, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!"

"But after you left Bubbleton," — said I, breaking a long and oppressive silence; "where did you go then?"

And looking at him closely, as I put the question, I saw that his countenance was distorted by that cynical expression, which I have already noticed as becoming habitual to it; and I also saw — what gave to that expression a pathetic effect — that it was mingled with tears, — not tears of weakness, such as flow from the surface of the sensibilities, but such as are wrung from the strong, earnest MAN, when the main purpose of his life is broken.

“After I left Bubbleton,” — said Brother Stringent, slowly, — “so you have not heard the rest?”

“No; only a few intangible rumors; I learned, however, that you had settled again.”

“I will finish my story, then, and you shall know the immediate cause of my giving up the ministry.”

And he resumed as follows:

“You must be aware that I left Bubbleton in no very cheerful state of mind. My confidence was abandoning me. I was no longer sanguine. The buoyancy of my nature was gone. I began to feel that I had trusted too much in the goodness of men, and hoped too much from their honor and generosity; and, O, Brother Chester! would that you might never experience, as you will, and as I have, the reaction of a too generous faith in your race!

“This, however, was not the greatest of my sorrows: I had begun to doubt the power of the Gospel to exert that transforming influence over men, of which I had once thought it capable. I saw but little evidence of its power. I noticed that most men either heard its lessons with discouraging apathy, or resented their application with anger and persecution. I gathered up the facts of my own experience, and the impressions derived from my observation abroad, and was overwhelmed by the conviction of the practical fruitlessness of Christian efforts.

“But I was not permitted to lapse into idleness. A family looked to me for support; and my poverty

drove me to action, when I would gladly have lain down, in utter weariness and despondency.

“I went up to the city, that I might learn what prospect there was of obtaining another settlement. My fame had preceded me — not to make my task easier, but to hedge it about with petty obstacles. I found that my enemies had created a prejudice against me in the minds of the most influential brethren, and that I was regarded as a rash, headstrong, and imprudent minister, whom it was not best to recommend to destitute societies.

“My self-respect was hurt, and my pride quickened, by this treatment. I made no attempt to disabuse those who had passed this hasty judgment upon me. Indeed, with my recent impressions of human nature, I did not wonder much at the unfavorable light in which I was viewed.

“I walked the peopled streets in such a solitude of heart as no tongue can describe. I was doubly poor,—money I had none, nor any means of earning it, and I was in debt for the bread that supported my dependent ones; but, worse than this, Faith and Courage — the current coin of manhood — had wasted from the bare treasury of my soul.

“Twice, in the course of my lonely walks through the inhospitable city, I met Mr. Downy, the Plush-street minister. Once, his wife was leaning on his arm, and what brightness of contentment and joy shone in their smiling countenances, as they passed! And how eloquently did the sumptuousness of their

apparel, and the glitter of their jewels, testify to the friendship and admiration of their parish! On the other occasion, it was Sunday, and the popular minister was about to delight a metropolitan audience with his obscure allusions and carefully-blunted rhetoric. How easy and care-free was his walk! and on the light, pure expanse of his brow, with what a delicate touch Time had registered the years! A fair hand rested upon his firm arm, and a glance of beauty stole up to his complacent face, and a crowd, that advertised its wealth and social preëminence by splendor of raiment and pride of bearing, surrounded him with its plummy magnificence, and bore him on, as it were, in a triumphal march. ‘O man of untroubled heart and prosperous fortunes!’ I exclaimed, as the dazzling vision moved by, ‘if THOU art minister of Him who trod the wine-press alone and found no recompense but in God, then is the web of our life woven of such strange illusions, that he is happiest who is most blind!’

“Then it was that I felt the power of a temptation hitherto unknown.

“Why combat the evil propensities of a world, too obstinate and base for redemption? Why sacrifice myself in a hopeless conflict with human selfishness? Why not conform, and concede, and — be happy? Ah, the happiness of a TRAITOR! but I listened to the alluring voice, and followed the captivating tempter up into the mountain, and surveyed the enchanting prospect to which he directed my eyes. *‘All this will*

I give thee, if THOU WILT FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME.'

"I considered the proposal. All the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; and for what? For worshipping one devil. I reflected: evidently it must be a grievous service that deserves such a recompense; shall I be happier for undertaking it? Again: Has he not promised the same reward to some millions of men already, and would there not be some difficulty in recognizing the claims of so many servants? Still again, 'the devil is a liar from the beginning'—in confirmation of which, one has only to remember, that 'the earth is the LORD'S,' and that He is the owner of the kingdoms, and the only Being who can bestow them.

"Thus I resisted the temptation to betray my office, though I felt, more and more, the necessity of resigning it, at no distant day.

"I had been 'lying upon my oars' some two months, when the opportunity presented itself for me to secure another location. The little parish in South Whiffleham offered me its support. It was not such a place as I desired, for several reasons. The salary offered appeared quite too meagre for the support of my family. The people were reported to be captious and fickle. And, moreover, many of them were in that state of ignorance that fosters the silliest prejudices, and gives to conceit its mulish invincibility.

"Still, at the dictation of necessity, and with a passiveness of spirit that comes only of exhausted

hope, I accepted the invitation, and moved to Whiffleham.

“My evil fortune pursued me, as I had half-expected. Consequences, like comets, carry tails of incalculable length. Bubbleton visited me with its vengeance, even in the retirement of Whiffleham.

“One of the parishioners chanced to visit this city, and to make the acquaintance of Mr. Fiscal and Mr. Arlington. Now mark the determined hostility of fate: Out of ten thousand human beings, assembled within the limits of Bubbleton, obstinate fate will select my two most powerful enemies to entertain my wayfaring parishioner. And, as a consequence, this man returns to Whiffleham, full of suspicion and apprehension. He regards me as a dangerous man, and feels it his duty to acquaint others with his impressions, and with the source of them, lest, unwatched, I run the parish into the Abolition vortex.

“Thus it happens that — ere I have had time to acquire the confidence of the people — that confidence is stolen away by misrepresentations, secretly insinuated into their minds. I am watched, like one who has shown signs of madness. Every sentence I utter in the pulpit is jealously criticized. Every ambiguous word I drop in conversation, receives an unfriendly interpretation.

“You may anticipate the result. The crisis came, but my experience had shown me the folly of resistance. The kingdom was not worth the contest. Like

one dead to glory, I retreated from Whiffleham, and became once more a fugitive.

“Here ends my brief and troubled ministry. I have no wish to continue the experiment. I have come to be regarded as unfitted for the profession; and I believe that I am. Were I to offer my services to any society where I am known, they would be declined; and, as I think, wisely. Successful ministers shake their heads, significantly, when my name is mentioned, and count up against me the sad list of my failures. What can I do but accept their charitable reprimands, and betake myself to other fields of labor?”

XXXI.

A HEART IN RUINS.

I WAS not quite pleased with the tone Brother Stringent's voice assumed, or with the expression of his face, at the conclusion of his narrative; but I found enough in his ministerial history to account for the state of his feelings.

After a short silence — by a transition habitual with him, and which marked the ever-changing temper of his feelings — he startled me by the pathetic energy of his utterance :

“ Yet, Brother Chester, in resigning the ministry, I resign the hopes that, more than all things beside, encouraged and animated my youth. I disappoint the expectations of those who sympathized with my early resolutions, and seconded my manly endeavors.

“ From my boyhood, it had been the cherished purpose of my heart to proclaim the Gospel, and to become endeared to my fellow-men by serving some of their higher needs, and soothing their severest afflictions. No employment appeared to me so truly glorious, as that of the faithful minister of Christ. To

be the servant of God's mercy, and the defender of virtue, here amid the allurements of the world,—to represent and enforce the example of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life,—to be near the heart of man in its troubled moods, and within the shelter of God's spirit continually,—and to devote all one's native gifts and laborious acquisitions to the advancement of human welfare, and receive in return the love and confidence of thousands of grateful hearts,—to grow old in this blessed service, and have one's white hairs venerated for the devotion they proclaim,—and to fall at last, at the end of the well-trodden course, with one's armor on, and his face lit up by a celestial glory—this seemed to me the noblest destiny that God permits any of his children to achieve.

“I owed these views, as well as the resolution that gathered them into a living purpose, to my mother, whose spirit, I thank God, is beyond the regrets and disappointments of this world! I owe many of my strongest incitements to my wife, whose sympathy I have possessed from her girlhood, and who lives to share my regrets, and the yet more bitter uncertainties of the future.

“Such is the purpose, and such are the hopes I cherished, amid the illusions of youth; and these are the things I have resigned, on obtaining a more accurate knowledge of men, and on coming in contact with the realities of the world.”

He paused again.

Throughout his narration, I had felt an uncomfort-

able influence stealing over me, and gradually chilling my heart.

It was the shadow of his misfortunes darkening my own perspective — already too deeply shaded by impending storms.

I thought of Thomas Carlyle's whimsical definition of scepticism — *the richest tropical fruit turned sour*; and felt how mournfully Brother Stringent verified the saying.

"Is it possible," said I, at length, "that you can have resigned views so noble — hopes so glorious? — things that form the main figures in the scenery of your youth, and that have such filial and affectionate associations?"

"They have not yet entirely relinquished their hold upon me," he answered; "but time will vanquish them, as it does all generous feelings and brave resolves!"

"Brother Stringent!"

"Well!"

"When a man believes what you have just asserted, he is morally ruined."

"I know it."

"Then recall that cynical sentiment. Your words infect me with doubts that would desecrate my life, if I entertained them."

"For your sake, then, be the sentiment recalled; though, like the truth which Galileo was commanded to renounce before the Inquisition, it must lie, secretly professed, in my too conscious heart!"

“I, at least, can never think thus — WILL never think thus, Brother Stringent !”

“You are young, Brother Chester, and your trust becomes your years. The morning mists of fancy veil yet the barren rocks and volcanic wastes, where your feet are destined to tread. But keep your faith while you can. Revel in its illusions while you may. I will not disturb it more.”

Then, after a moment's pause, he added, in a most earnest voice :

“If you so much dread the loss of your faith in man — and dread it you well may — let me advise you to leave Bubbleton — to leave it without delay : for it was here that my heart received its severest wound ; and there is little hope of your being more fortunate.

“You, doubtless, wonder at the sad change which my experience has wrought in me. I have named no great calamity, such as you may have supposed necessary to produce such a revolution. But they err who suppose that any single event, however direful, can work a change in the nature of man, equal to that which is wrought by the concurrent action of *many* inferior troubles, assailing him without respite or change.— It is the incessant chafing of small sorrows that affects the heart most. So a single drop of water, dripping incessantly upon the criminal's head, becomes a means of horrible torment.

“Thus it is that the ministry wears out and perverts so many strong and promising men.

“It imposes a constant strain of anxiety, that insensibly, yet rapidly, wastes the nervous powers, jades down the spirits, and turns the head prematurely gray. What an innumerable combination of cares loads down the pastor’s mind! What a diversity of dispositions and interests he is expected to conciliate and reconcile! In what various scenes must he appear — and always in harmony with the occasion! What prolonged exercises of thought and research are necessary, if he would preserve the interest of his audience!

“But worse than all these are the petty vexations, and unavoidable enmities, that cleave to him like a thorn-woven vesture. These can neither be avoided nor conquered. Like hosts of swift-mounted Cossacks, they harass his weary ranks, and allow him no rest; but never abide the charge of his invincible forces.”

XXXII.

MY RESOLUTION.

I HAVE thus attempted to give my readers some idea of Brother Stringent's professional experience, and of the state of mind to which he had become reduced.

His visit could not have occurred at a more luckless period, as regards its influence upon me. Recent events had depressed my own heart to such a degree, already, that I was not prepared to withstand the effects of his gloomy and oppressive society. He gave an impulse to my thoughts, from which I found it hard to recover, and imparted a hue to my feelings that darkened the aspect of every object.

It scarcely required the desponding influence of this visit, or Brother Stringent's emphatic advice, to persuade me that I ought to leave Bubbleton. The more I reflected the more clearly did it appear, that my usefulness, in this place, was ended; and that the welfare of the parish, as well as my own peace of mind, demanded the resignation of my charge.

In a word, I determined to intimate my desire to

have the connection dissolved the ensuing Sunday, and leave the scene of so much embarrassment and trouble, without further delay.

Having formed this resolution, I thought I would ride over to D——, and acquaint Oracular Blunt with my design.

That eccentric minister was absent — a circumstance which I regretted less, for the reason that I had feared some opposition from him to the course I proposed taking, and I was glad to avoid a conflict with his sturdy, indomitable spirit.

That day, I witnessed a rather curious spectacle, which I will mention by way of relieving these last too sombre records :

I saw — passing along the main street of Bubbleton, and linked arm in arm — Mr. Peppery and Mr. Saturnine Glum. The little reformer — recovered from his injuries, and zealous as ever in behalf of the cause he had espoused — was expatiating on the wrongs of slavery and on the guilt of the nation, with a rapidity of utterance and vehemence of gesture, truly amazing. And the slow, leaden-eyed apothecary — as if delighting in the horrors his companion portrayed so vividly, and secretly congratulating himself on having secured such congenial company — was listening with an air of grim satisfaction, and signifying his approval, now and then, by a heavy nod.

Thus these strange men pursued their way — unconscious of all the notice they elicited, and utterly

absorbed by those sad topics which formed their bond of sympathy.

At last, Mr. Peppery has found one human being, amid the perversities of Bubbleton, who will endorse the bitterest truths he can utter ; and Saturnine Glum may have the walls of his sepulchral fancy hung with pictures of woe and guilt, such as he has coveted for many a day in vain.

XXXIII.

I RESIGN MY OFFICE.

THE wearisome, desponding week — lingering as all unhappy time seems to linger — dragged itself away at last ; and the Sunday came — the day I was to resign my charge of the parish.

The day opened with a dull, hesitating April rain ; and while the languor of spring pervaded the frame, the sombre aspect of the sky — hung wide with mourning vestures — oppressed and clouded the mind.

I threw back the shutter, and surveyed the dreary streets and dripping buildings — thinking of that first Sabbath morning, when, from one of Mr. Arlington's chambers, I had counted ten church-spires glistening in the sun. I contrasted that day with this — the buoyant spirit, then serene at the outset of the race, with the doubting heart, divested of its early confidence, and thwarted in its dearest wish, and halting in the first stage of its course. I thought of my endeavors, of my sufferings, and of my failure ; and the spirit of my late visitor — stealing into my heart like a poisonous odor — unconsciously colored the whole retrospect.

At nine o'clock, a carriage called and conveyed me to a wedding scene.

The couple were young, accomplished, virtuous, and very tenderly attached. A numerous company of relatives and friends were assembled, and the congratulations were earnest, and the gayety contagious. There the gloom of the morning was dispelled from all hearts but mine: I alone was impervious to the festive beams that played on so many happy faces. There was that in the occasion that suggested a CONTRAST, of which no other person was conscious, and which I had not fortitude to endure. I gave the parties my benediction with confidence in their future, and with an unselfish interest in their felicity; but the words echoed in my own heart, like clods falling upon the coffin of some cherished thing.

Perhaps I ought to withhold such confessions? Many there are, I know, who associate with the sacred office a stoicism of feeling to which few can attain, and which seems to me as unbecoming as it is difficult. To disown one's human sympathies and susceptibilities, in embracing the work of the ministry, can neither fit the soul for its chosen sphere, nor enhance the sum of its ultimate acquisitions. The experience of the Catholic Church should teach us this, at least.

The sensations and the sorrows to which I have alluded, were realized twenty years since; and when I survey them now, from the meridian of my manhood — tracing their springs and observing their tendencies with the critical judgment of mature years — I find

that few of the feelings and griefs, which memory has saved from the wreck of my youth, have borne purer fruit or more blessed deeds.

The hour of service came.

The bells rang dull through the sluggish air, and a diminutive line of worshippers responded, languidly, to their summons.

Every rainy Sunday is marked in the preacher's calendar with Indian-ink. He has neither the animating influences of his ordinary audience, nor the interested attention of the "unterrified" few. The stupor of loneliness weighs down speaker and hearer. The vast spaces of the unoccupied church have no response for the earnest word or enkindled glance. Our oratory — tame enough at all times by reason of its familiarity — is now a dumb show. The intolerable vacancy assumes a derisive air, and mumbles our words. These influences are fatal to any hearty enjoyment, or faithful application, of the service. We hurry through it as if it were a rehearsal, and fly from it as from a task.

There are several classes who avoid the church of a rainy Sunday: The frivolous, whose finery would not appear to advantage, and whose curiosity would not have its customary range: The prudent, who are afflicted with a class of diseases which renders them singularly susceptible to a Sunday atmosphere: The critical, who are touched by the presentiment of a dull sermon, and who are persuaded that they can find better entertainment at home.

But I must hasten the recital of the singular transactions of that day.

At the close of the morning service, I particularly requested that all the members of the society might be present in the afternoon, as I wished to communicate to them a matter of considerable importance.

Several persons waited and spoke to me, as I left the pulpit.

Among them were Saturnine Glum and Harry Hanson.

"Sorrowful days!" quoth the apothecary, rolling his leaden eyes in a most distressing manner; "the parish is being rent all to atoms. I never knew such an evil state of affairs. I'm satisfied you can't maintain yourself, Brother Castor, among so many violent men. However," he added, after a pause and a prolonged sigh, "you'll find men much the same, everywhere, I dare say,—an unhappy, stiff-necked race. And it's a fact a young man can't learn too soon, which is some consolation, Brother Castor!"

Here I succeeded in gliding past Mr. Glum, and in shaking hands with the blacksmith.

It was a relief to hear his hearty and manly voice, and to see the look of earnest, uncompromising friendship that beamed over his honest countenance.

"Courage, Brother Chester!" said he; "don't falter nor flag; things are working as well as one could expect, I believe; and the parish will do you justice yet."

I could only press his hand fervently, in reply; I was not master of my voice.

But old Silas Willet stirred my feelings deepest, that morning, by an inquiry most proper and natural in itself :

“Have you heard from Brother Arlington’s, to-day?”

“No.”

The monosyllable was all I uttered; I lacked the courage, or at least the self-control, to question him in turn.

But, just as I left the church, I heard the old man say — apparently in answer to some interrogation, —

“She was n’t expected to live through the night. — Poor girl! she had strange ways, and did n’t seem happy, of late.”

I walked home, through the rain and the dark sluggish air. How vividly it rose before me, all the way — that pale, afflicted face, which had shone so ghastly under the rays of the wintry moon, when last we spoke together!

In the afternoon, there is a change in the wind, and the storm ceases. I find quite a large congregation assembled — much anxiety apparent to hear what may be said. After many vain efforts to collect my thoughts, and quiet the tumult of my troubled feelings, I resolve to trust myself, and commence the service.

Just as I rise to give out the hymn, a well-known figure moves up the aisle, and takes possession of his luxurious pew.

His soft and measured step, and the imposing dig-

nity of his deportment, attract all wandering glances, as a magnet attracts steel-dust. But it is not merely respect and admiration which his appearance elicits, to-day, but sympathy and solicitude; for it is known that, during the last few days, the powers of life and death have fought in the rich man's home, for the possession of one beloved; and few are aware whether the contest is yet decided, or how.

But this I notice — in one quick, inquiring glance — that the impress of grief is deep and dark upon his face, and that the calm, steady, self-assured look of conscious strength, has faded from his eyes.

The unexpected appearance of Mr. Arlington awakened a storm of sensations, that threatened to unman me entirely. Nevertheless, I recovered sufficiently to pursue the service, though, as I fear, with obvious confusion.

The sermon was to be mainly extemporized, and was to consist of a review of my ministry in Bubbleton, and a statement of the reasons that induced me to ask for its suspension. In the outset, I spoke with hesitation and embarrassment,—my mind was preoccupied, and my ideas were involved; and I feared, more than once, that it would turn out an absolute failure. Finally, however, I began to discern my way,—language came under my control, —my voice assumed a steady and compact tone, and I spoke with tolerable satisfaction and effect.

I began by rehearsing my estimate of the minister's

office — what it is in itself, and what it requires of its incumbent. I described my own resolutions, my efforts, and my trials. I showed that the views and interests of a large portion of the parish were such, as to prevent the discharge of what I considered my duty, except at the sacrifice of all Christian harmony and personal happiness.

So long as there remained a prospect of ultimately securing the desired end, I had consented to sacrifice my popularity and peace of mind ; but since troubles had multiplied around me to such an extent, as, apparently, to counteract my influence and paralyze my ambition, I deemed it most expedient and desirable to withdraw from the office I held.

I concluded by expressing the hope, that my resignation might not increase, but rather allay, the dissensions, that were agitating the parish ; and by assuring my personal friends — while I thanked them for all their kindness to me — that they could not render me a more precious service, at this time, than by permitting me to escape from the galling cares and petty conflicts that made me wretched, to some place of quiet and of repose, where I might recover my cheerfulness and courage.

Like one tempest-driven and heart-weary, I asked no favor now but rest.

While delivering this discourse, I did not once see Mr. Arlington's face.

While other members of the parish betrayed their

various emotions, he sat grave and silent, with his eyes bent upon the ground.

At the close of the service — having requested those interested in the society to remain in their seats — I formally tendered my resignation, to take effect in four weeks.

Exhausted and dispirited, I sat down, and awaited the action of the meeting.



HARRY HANSON ADDRESSING THE CHURCH MEETING.

XXXIV.

THE DECISIVE HOUR.

FOR the space of a minute, there was the most profound silence. Both friends and enemies were taken by surprise.

At length, Mr. Gleason rose, and moved the acceptance of my resignation.

Mr. Wilkins seconded the motion.

This action brought up three or four of my friends, by a common impulse. In vain I signed to them to remain silent; they had espoused my cause, and were resolved to prove their devotion.

I saw, in the resolute glance, and compressed lip and sternly-knitted brow, the zeal of partisanship spreading from face to face; and dreaded, with good reason, the contact of those determined wills and excited tempers.

I interposed my voice, and my entreaties, to avert the impending collision. They all took their seats, with the exception of Harry Hanson.

The blacksmith stood erect, with the firmness of a granite pillar — the majesty of his stature enhanced

by a glow of excited feeling that animated every lineament of his countenance.

All eyes rested upon him, with an interest not to be disguised ; for he was an individual universally known in Bubbleton, and this was his first appearance in a parish meeting.

“Hear me,” said Harry Hanson, speaking in a clear, resounding voice, and stretching forth his brawny arm ; “I am but a stranger among you, gentlemen, and some of you may think it more becoming in me to hold my peace. But, Lord ! I’ve an interest in this question, gentlemen, that makes it necessary for me to speak. I am greatly surprised by Brother Chester’s resolution. I thought he had made up his mind to weather the gale. I think he must be influenced by some false impressions, as regards the feelings of the parish at large. I believe he must have over-rated the adverse current, and under-rated that which is favorable. I believe that a patient continuance in well-doing, on his part, and a moderate exercise of reason and conscience, on our part, will bring us all into smooth water, sooner or later. For one, I shan’t consent to let Brother Chester go. He’s the only minister in Bubbleton I care a fig for, and the only one whose preaching does me any good ; and, therefore, I hope he may be persuaded to withdraw his resignation.”

Here the blacksmith paused, but remained standing, as in momentary irresolution ; while Mr. Gleason

and Mr. Wilkins conferred in whispers, with bent heads and flushed faces.

Mr. Arlington still remained silent, his eyes bent steadfastly on the ground.

Presently Harry Hanson, overcoming his hesitation, resumed :

“As regards the points of difference between Brother Chester and part of the parish — touching the matter and tone of preaching — I should like to offer an opinion, — especially as I once, myself, entertained the notion I am now going to speak against.

“Everybody knows what the avowed OBJECT of preaching is ; but if it don't answer that object — if it don't make us better — if it don't pull down our pride and build up our virtue — Lord ! what's the use of paying for it, or listening to it ? ”

These words fixed the attention of every hearer.

Mr. Hanson continued :

“Let me illustrate the idea, gentlemen : Let me compare the preacher to a physician, which, if I remember right, will be according to the Gospel. Now, suppose I am taken sick, and I send for Doctor Gull. What do I reasonably expect from this deep-sighted gentleman ? That he will sit down and tacitly assume that I have no sickness at all, while he expatiates on the awful disease of some person over the way, or prescribes for somebody's malady who died a thousand years ago ? By no means — I expect no such thing. For it is self-evident, that Doctor Gull might continue to visit me, in this manner, till doom's-day, without

my realizing any benefit whatever from his skill. What I do expect, is, that he will examine ME, personally and thoroughly, and kill my disease if he can, however painful his treatment may be.

“ Well, now take the preacher, who is a doctor, too, though he gets his diploma from another place. We send for him; of course we are sick, or we should n’t want him at all.

“ Now, gentlemen, I want to know what you expected of Doctor Chester here? You *assumed* that you were sick when you engaged his services, and he — *knowing* that you were — treated you as a wise and faithful doctor should; and now, behold the return you have made! Finding the prescription bitter, you have rejected it altogether, and taken up clubs to beat the honest physician for having offered it! To say nothing about the ingratitude and injustice of your course, how do you ever expect to get CURED, at this rate, gentlemen?

“ Allow me to pursue my comparison further still :

“ Suppose a very destructive epidemic appears in Bubbleton, and that hundreds of our citizens are prostrated by it at once. What is Doctor Gull’s obvious duty, in such a critical time? — Is n’t it to cure all the people he can, and stop the course of the malady as soon as he can? To be sure it is. But what if Doctor Gull — instead of applying his skill to any of these cases — should go through the town telling us how such an epidemic once raged, say, in Babylon, and what a desolation it caused in that great

city? Would anybody be satisfied with Doctor Gull's course? Would anybody *pay* him for such an idle, useless service? Wouldn't everybody feel that he had shown himself culpably indifferent to the public welfare? Ah, more than this — wouldn't the public indignation drive him from the town, as a heartless trifler and an all-offending nuisance?

"Well, gentlemen, Doctor Chester finds, in his line of practice, just such an epidemic. We call it Intemperance. It is wasting the community like a plague. How many of its victims we have all seen! What a caravan of woes moves in its train!

"Doctor Chester, here, pursues the same course in his department, which we have agreed Doctor Gull should pursue in *his*. Yet, what a hue and cry you have raised against him! Lord! you're in the wrong, gentlemen — utterly in the wrong.

"For my part, I entirely approve Brother Chester's manner of preaching; he talks to the point, and I see at once what he means; he don't try to whip the devil round the stump, and I respect him all the more, when his Gospel sword lunges right through some pet vice of mine, that can't be covered or defended.

"Gentlemen, I'm not going to detain you much longer; but there's one thing we've got to bear in mind:—So long as we assume to be sinners—which we know we are—we must expect to be dealt with as such; and the more our consciences are pricked, the better it will be for us in the end.

“The worse a man’s case is, the more painful must be the remedy, and the louder will be his roaring!

“And so all our railing against the physician—though it may give him trouble, for the time being—will, in the end, only serve to call attention to our own maladies, and fix the scorn of the world upon us!”

The blacksmith sat down.

The effect of his reasoning was obvious in more than one bowed head and downcast look.

Those two prominent members of the “opposition”—Mr. Gleason and Mr. Wilkins—sat, pale and unmanned, covered with astonishment and impotent resentment. Their aspect was pitiful in the extreme.

As for myself, I was amazed at the ready resources and calm bravery displayed by Harry Hanson, in this very effective address—much as I had previously observed him, and high as he had stood in my esteem.

After a protracted silence, Mr. Arlington—who had sat, during all this time, with bowed head—slowly rose.

Such an expression as his face then bore—as he turned it sadly to the searching light—was never seen on that placid front before.

A breathless, wondering curiosity pervaded the assembly, and hushed the church to utter silence.

The rich man hesitated—struggled, apparently, with himself—and then spoke as follows:

“Brethren, since I last appeared among you, my views on several subjects have been changed. The

Almighty has spoken to me from a cloud, as he did of old unto Moses; and what I denied in the day of prosperity, I must now profess in the gloom of affliction.

“ I agree with the sentiments of Brother Hanson, which he has just set forth in so impressive a manner. With him, and with others, whose friendship our young pastor has secured, I unite myself, in requesting that he will immediately withdraw his resignation.

“ And, brethren, in order that he may do this cheerfully, and with confidence in our future support, I move that all present unite in proffering the request ! ”

The motion was promptly seconded, and it passed — Mr. Gleason and Mr. Wilkins alone dissenting; though they, afterwards, coincided with the popular will, and renewed their expressions of friendliness.

My readers can imagine my feelings far better than I can describe them. Such a result I had never counted on, even for an instant. It threw me into the most complete confusion.

Of course, I withdrew my resignation — there was no other course open to me, — and when my old and true friends crowded to my side, with their warm congratulations, and generous expressions of esteem, I felt my spirit renewed, and faith and resolution returning.

But all this brought no forgetfulness of that PERSONAL BEREAVEMENT, the sense of which swept deep

and dark through my soul, when Mr. Arlington took my hand, and said :

“ Brother Chester, I am a grief-stricken man ; — come with me to my home, and learn how wretched I am ! ”

So the rich man's door was to open to me again, in renewed confidence and affection ; but what was left to make that restitution precious ?

XXXV.

MR. ARLINGTON'S HOME.

As Mr. Arlington and I issued from the church, together, on that memorable afternoon, I noticed that the sun — whose rays had smote the murky atmosphere all day in vain — now beamed forth in perfect splendor; and, like virtue, emerging in triumph from the eclipse of suspicion, rode on serene in its pathway of light.

If my mind had not been occupied by the uncertainty and fear of a great affliction, I might have thought of the phenomenon, perhaps, as an omen of brighter days for both pastor and parish; for it became instantly apparent that the sudden change in Mr. Arlington's views and position, would work a corresponding change in the views and position of many members of the society.

Mr. Arlington was not only the wealthiest man in the parish, but the most active and influential, — active because he loved a conspicuous and commanding position, and influential, by virtue of his disciplined manners, his winning social qualities, and a certain dignity

of deportment, that awed by its unconscious authority, while it did not provoke resistance by any betrayal of arrogance. Such a man exerts a personal sway, little less than despotic, over a large class of minds; and the completeness of his authority is seen in the fact, that his subjects have no disturbing consciousness of being ruled. It requires strong individuality, and clear perceptions, to resist and scatter the subtleties of an influence so amiable, and yet so persistent.

Mr. Arlington did not speak until we had reached his house; and I—reluctant to lift the veil within whose sombre shadowings he walked—forbore to question his sorrow.

I was sensible of a momentary feeling of relief, when I saw that the door was not craped.

Again I entered that house, which contained the elements of so much hope and dread for my own heart to wrestle with,—of so much poignant regret and unavailing repentance for him, who had built its walls as a bulwark against his cares.

Mr. Arlington led me into a private apartment, shaded by shutters closely drawn, and animated only by a few brands that smouldered in the grate.

“Brother Chester,” said he, with a melancholy utterance, “I know you are above the remembrance of the wrong I have done you, or the trouble I have occasioned you. I have offered some proof, this afternoon, of my restored friendship for you; and your presence here, in this afflictive season, testifies that all differences between us, are reconciled. Nay,—your

looks answer me, and it is enough. Wait here for a few moments; I will soon return for you."

He left the room, and I heard his slow, muffled step ascending the staircase.

Left companion of my own feelings, I tried to nerve my soul, by prayer and faith, to meet with becoming fortitude its impending trial.

There are few emergencies in which a Christian — renewing in his filial breast the image of God, and subsiding into the great THOUGHT of the Divine paternity — will not find the calmness of a holy trust beginning to pervade his nature, and a mysterious strength sustaining him as by an invisible arm. I felt this influence spreading over the troubled surface of my soul, and its fears and anxieties grew calm.

As my eyes became accustomed to the obscurity of the room, I noticed that a picture was suspended against the opposite wall. It had been veiled by a drapery of lace, which was now folded down from the upper half of the canvas.

I recognized it as a superbly painted portrait of Miss Arlington, which I had often seen, in company with the other family likenesses, hung on the parlor wall.

Its removal to this room — where the rich man had probably shut himself up to struggle with his accusing thoughts, or to cherish his expiatory sufferings — was highly significant and impressive.

I was thinking of this, when Mr. Arlington returned.

He sat down, with his face carefully averted from the light.

“Strengthen me, Brother Chester,” said he — and his voice was strangely low and humble — “with your prayers and your better faith. My child yet lives, but we are told that she cannot recover. Her disease, as you are probably aware, is of the mind, rather than of the body; it came of prolonged mental anxieties, and was precipitated by a terrible excitement. It has rent her constitution, and seriously threatened her reason. I have never seen sufferings so complicated and dreadful as hers, nor sufferings so unmerited.”

He paused, and I exerted myself to make a becoming reply.

But he knew not how largely I shared his grief, or he had not looked to me for comfort.

“I wish you to see her,” he resumed, “and calm as best you may her remaining hours. She has mentioned you, and I think you have influenced her judgment, and her views of life, more than you may have supposed.”

I told him how sincerely I desired to serve them all, in this sad experience, according to the humble abilities I possessed, and how prayerfully I would strive to prepare the mind of her whom God had summoned, for the change that impended.

“But first, you must know the true source of this calamity,” said Mr. Arlington, passing his hand over

his face, and resting it upon his heart, with a sigh of pain.

“I must confide to you a revelation of my own life — a sad, humiliating disclosure of my own worldliness and irreligion — for from *me*, my child not only derived life, but all the agencies that have been poisoning and blighting it, from the first quickening of her intelligence.

“It is strange that I did not observe, earlier, how inevitably all this must follow,—but the evil of my heart blinded my understanding, and I walked in a maze of darkness, unconscious of the retribution that was slowly girding me with its bands.”

XXXVI.

CONFESSION.

I WOULD have saved Mr. Arlington the pain of this meditated confession, but he persisted in his resolution.

There is that in the very nature of true penitence, which prompts to confession. The awakened heart seeks one, beneath heaven, to whom it may confide the acknowledgment of its errors, and who shall bear witness, as it were, to the depth and vehemence of its contrition. It is the first step in the work of atonement.

“You are aware,” said Mr. Arlington, “that, in the world’s eye, and judged by the world’s standard, I am a respectable, prosperous, and fortunate man. Prosperous, I certainly am, in the ordinary sense of the term. I have made a fortune and a position for myself and mine, for which most men strive in vain. I am rich, and men defer to my opinions, not because they are wise, but because I am powerful.

“But this very prosperity, for which I am envied by superficial men, has proved my snare.

“My wealth has risen — a hard, impervious, glittering wall — between my heart and its Creator; and the beams of the celestial sun have been denied access to my soul.

“I have grown hardened and indifferent toward those higher objects, for which, as all rational men agree, we ought chiefly to live. The sense of right and the ideal of duty have become more and more indistinct and weak — as I suppose they always do — by being plied with incessant sophisms, and by being continually over-ridden. I have learned the fatal art of compromising with evil things, and have acquired the habit of putting rigid principles aside, as impracticable speculations.

“In a word, I have allowed my good fortune to seduce me — to pervert my moral sense, and to estrange my heart from its God, and from its earliest and best convictions.

“I was not conscious of my decline, in these respects,— at least, I was never startled by the thought of any serious retrogression,—for I kept up my formal connection with religion, and was constant in my attendance upon all its ordinances. It did not occur to me — as it has since — that a mere outward observance of religious rites, when the blood of the heart does not pulsate in them, is the most dangerous seduction of true piety, since it lulls the heart into a false sense of security, and makes it careless of the *spirit* by employing it with the *form*.

“Occasionally, it is true, my conscience would get

disturbed, and my dormant convictions temporally revived, by some pungent sentence from the preacher; but I resisted these motions of my better nature, and they troubled me less and less.

“Thus I have continued to live — a cold, comfortable, worldly life — its splendor, that of money — its attractions, those of Fashion — its consolations, the esteem and deference of men.

“And thus, to all outward appearance, I have been a fortunate man.

“O, there is no folly so great as the wisdom by which the world prides itself on being guided! It is what you preachers often say, but, alas! you find few who will credit the saying, unless it be those, who, like myself, bear witness to it with tears!

“Thus I have lived:

“And, meanwhile, God — whose processes are so inscrutable and so awful — has been preparing an invisible retribution in the bosom of my home.

“He has chosen a life dearer to me than my own — yes, he has chosen the heart of my pure, high-minded and noble child, as the depository of his judgments — as the minister of his just and unavoidable resentment.

“In the agonies I have been doomed to witness in yonder room, where her young life is wasting hour by hour, and in the self-reproach and vain regret that will follow me to the grave, I reap the terrible reward of slighted opportunities and perverted means.”

Here Mr. Arlington's fortitude abandoned him, and

he was obliged to walk the room for some moments, ere he was sufficiently recovered to resume.

“It appears that my daughter—in the simplicity and sincerity of her nature—with her clear perceptions and practical estimate of things—learned to rate my religion at its true value.

“I do not mean that she has ever voluntarily failed in due respect for me, or in due affection, but that she *saw*, intuitively, as it were, how shallow and unreal my religious faith and principles were. She saw, in my case, and, I fear, in that of too many others, how lightly the most solemn things were held and used, and how little the most terrible convictions appeared to influence our lives.

“As her mind grew, and her observation became more extended and critical, she grew accustomed to reason on these things; and the consequence was a growing suspicion that religion, in all its forms, was merely traditional, or the growth of human speculations, fears and desires.

“How could it be the reality it assumed to be, and yet affect men so little? Who could help distrusting its verities, while its fruit appeared so meagre?

“This fatal scepticism—thus growing up with her maturing judgment, and infusing its poison into the sources of her life—was, as I now perceive, the daily, PRACTICAL lesson which my own life afforded her. I gave the premises, in my familiar, but perverted character, and she drew from them a legitimate conclusion; the error was all mine.

“It was not until about a year since, that I began to observe in her some evidence of an unquiet mind.

“On several occasions, she startled me with some peculiar observation.

“I saw that she avoided society, and read grave books; and grew addicted to revery. She was less often at the piano, and confined more to her own chamber. Her mother found her, more than once, in tears that could not be accounted for.

“So great a stranger had I become to my own spiritual nature, that I was slow in interpreting the struggles transpiring in hers. And even had I suspected the nature of her trouble, I must have shrunk from partaking of so sacred a confidence, so unfitted was I to guide her into peace.

“My daughter’s doubts did not congeal into absolute unbelief. They were disturbed, now and then, by the spectacle of real piety — by an example of resolute Christian devotion, that seemed to argue the reality of religion, and that inspired her with momentary hope. Brother Stringent’s course, and yours, were cases that could not be reconciled with the sceptical conclusions she had drawn from other men’s lives. Oracular Blunt, likewise, seemed to testify to the power and verity of religion, with a force not easily overcome.

“You doubtless remember the interest your sermon on truth elicited in her mind, and how earnestly she defended you, with the example of John Knox,

against murmurs which I am ashamed for having uttered.

“Thus — driven to and fro by alternate doubt and hope; and holding that serious view of life that made rest impossible so long as assurance was not obtained — my poor child has fought the dreary fight, without sympathy and without assistance.”

“No,” exclaimed I, interrupting him, “not without *sympathy*; for I have watched her course for months — suspecting what a warfare it was that she was conducting, and praying that she might be led to the perfect light.”

“Ah, then,” he replied, “I see what it meant — that mention of your name in the wild agony of her delirium, when I thought, in the blindness of my mind, and the intolerance of my judgment, that you had strove to influence her for less sacred ends; — but mind it not now — let *that* be forgotten !”

“Yes, let it be forgotten,” murmured I; but my thought was not his — the proud and fallen man, who might have crossed my love as remorselessly as death was now about to cross it !

There was silence between us, as if heart spoke to heart; and perhaps it did.

At last he spoke :

“You conversed with her, on the unhappy state of her mind ?”

“Once — and but briefly.”

“Recently ?”

“The last time I saw her: it was the evening I conducted her from Dr. Screamer’s church.”

I then made some explanations concerning the transactions of that night.

Mr. Arlington listened with absorbing interest.

My statement relieved him of some uncertainties he had felt, in consequence of not having heard any authentic account of the affair, further than was contained in my published card, which, in the nature of the case, could not embrace all the particulars that interested him.

“Then little more remains for me to add,” resumed Mr. Arlington: “your knowledge of the state of mind in which you left her, that night, will prepare you for what ensued.

“I had observed my daughter’s altered demeanor, for a considerable time; but my interest in her was becoming less tender than usual, for the reason that she had grown accustomed to controvert my views, on certain subjects, and I felt a secret irritation at encountering so firm an opposition in my own household.

“My retribution had already commenced; for I was storing up additional elements of repentance, in my secret resentment against her, whose simple truthfulness was ever confuting my sophistry.

“Some weeks since — as you know — she ceased to accompany us to church. She gave no reasons — except a simple preference for remaining at home. Mrs. Arlington was troubled by the caprice

— as we regarded it — but I was secretly pleased; for I naturally attributed to the influence of your preaching, the views and disposition she had manifested in conflict with my own.

“I became aware of her attending, occasionally, the meetings at Dr. Screamer’s church; but no thought of the danger to which she might be exposed, occurred to me. I knew almost nothing of her spiritual struggles, and was not prepared to estimate her peril.

“She knew that *I* professed a more rational faith, and I foolishly supposed that *that* would furnish her with an impregnable defence !

“I hope there is not another parent in the parish who cherishes such a fallacy. I now see that it is not enough for my children to know that I am convinced of the truth of our peculiar faith : They must know the grounds, the evidences of my belief, or they cannot possess the assurance which I have. If they derive their faith from me, they have only a human authority for their trust; but if I teach them the sacred sources whence it is derived, they will know that it is authorized by God.

“All this I have neglected, and behold what a calamitous consequence is visited upon me !

“The evening before this sorrow burst upon us, I was unusually depressed. I might have foreboded something, but that the even and prosperous current of my life, had divested my mind of all apprehensions.

“I left the store at an early hour, and came home.

I did not see Louisa; but she was so frequently in the retirement of her chamber, that I thought nothing of her absence.

“Mrs. Arlington, I believe, was not aware of her being away from home.

“I retired presently, but a vague uneasiness prevented me from sleeping until the night was far gone.

“I awoke, about sunrise, and found the house in commotion.

“My poor child had been seized with a violent illness, which manifested itself, chiefly, in terrible pains darting through the brain. Her cries had already roused the family.

“I doubt whether I can speak of what followed.

“Delirium ensued, almost immediately. In her frantic and agonized exclamations, she revealed the long and bitter conflict of her doubts and hopes. The history of her afflictive experience was thus rehearsed, with all the tragical accompaniments of madness.

“I heard and saw — at first, with the stunning insensibility that usually precedes the full conviction of a great sorrow. But unconscious allusions were made that pierced my worldly heart, and rent the veil from my understanding.

“I tried to force the responsibility elsewhere — to make it rest with you; for her frenzy teemed with allusions to you, and to some exciting scene in which you had been associated with her. But it was in vain. My resentment against you soon melted in juster and severer convictions of my own culpability.

Her physician said that her disease was the growth of years — a malady of the mind, that defied his science, and must run its violent career, obedient to its peculiar causes.

“I saw — I felt — that it was my work. I had no refuge from condemnation. God spoke to me in her unconscious cries and accusations.— She — tender and innocent and noble,— she — poisoned and blighted thus, in the first bloom of her womanhood, for my sins — was become the instrument of Divine retribution !

“All this I felt and realized, as though an angel from heaven had declared it to me.

“And thus, Brother Chester, you find me a changed man. Pray for me, for I cannot tell you all my grief — all my repentance, or my desolation.”

His bowed head and quaking frame — his high, commanding brow so overcast and humble — they appealed to me, as the form of man never appealed before !

Mr. Arlington suddenly aroused himself, and, with a strong effort of self-command, exclaimed :

“My sorrow is selfish, Brother Chester: no, it is not me — it is my child who needs your offices now. Come !”

“Brother Arlington, you have not told me all,— is she conscious ?”

“Fully conscious, now.”

“And knows that she has been called hence.”

“I believe she knows.”

“Has she expressed a fear of death ?”

“Not since her reason returned. She is thoughtful and calm; and far more beautiful than when she sat for this.”

He pointed to the portrait, and passed slowly out — leading me to the chamber of the dying.

O, human heart, be still ! Deny thyself, and prove thy faith in God. Through the valley and shadow, march, as one whom Divine hands have consecrated, and the tears of affliction washed pure from earthly soil.

XXXVII.

MISS ARLINGTON'S CHAMBER.

It was in the twilight of that solemn Sabbath evening, that I passed into the chamber of the dying girl.

What it was that supported me, through the ensuing scene, and gave me the tranquil fortitude to minister where I had need to be ministered unto — may be known to those, only, who have attained the spirit of resignation, under the loss of all that affection holds dearest. I will not dwell upon the bitterness of my own grief. I have already confessed my human weakness, but I do not wish to parade my sorrow. Nor need I dwell upon the source or sufficiency of the *comfort* that came to me, by God's wise appointment,— first, in an inward strength that nerved me for the exigency of the hour, and, afterward — day by day — in a series of hallowed reflections that peopled the void in my heart.

My first anxious survey of her countenance, assured me that the strife had passed, in the soul of my friend. She lay calm, thoughtful, resigned — as though her

spirit were tranquillized by a presence, visible to her eyes alone.

The curtain had been drawn from a window near the head of the couch, disclosing to her a full view of the glowing west, where the lingering day burnished the horizon with glory, as it faded.

Her look rested on that vision of material splendor, with an expression of serene contentment which words cannot portray, while her face borrowed from it, as it were, a hue of celestial beauty. Speaking more accurately, however, that beauty was the development of her soul's peace and victorious faith. The warfare was ended: rest and assurance had come, at last; and her departing spirit, like the fading day, was to leave the witness of its inherent excellence, beaming gloriously at the end of its course.

As I sat by that bed-side, and spoke on the great themes of God's providence and man's destiny,—themes that transcend the capacity of the soul, in its ordinary posture, but which are only found adapted to the breadth of its aspirations, when confronted by the prospect of eternity,—I found that the whole range of my thoughts had been anticipated, and that a power, more subtle than man's wisdom, had drawn the veil from her spirit. It was not for me to teach one, whose understanding God had illumined by so triumphant a confidence. It was not mine to administer comfort where death was already baffled, and immortality consciously possessed.

Yet, in this confidence there was no presumption.

Indeed, *that* is a feeling which rarely attends the soul so far on its spiritual destination.

Hers appeared, rather, as the simple conviction of what she SAW, by perceptions which are thus quickened only by the parting of flesh and spirit.

Instances of such preternatural assurance — sometimes accompanied by exclamations of ecstatic delight — have fallen under the observation of all who are familiar with Christian departures. The immortal principle attains such maturity as to look through its material tenement, into those spiritual vistas that open into futurity. Here, we see the soul rising, august, into its native element — unscathed by death or time, the twin destroyers that wanton in the ruin of all things else.

From this dying girl, I obtained an evidence of the future life, more convincing than any philosophy can furnish. In the light that was dawning upon her, I seemed to see further than before into the awful mysteries of the Christian faith. Her words, and her untroubled look, awed and elevated each member of the household. It seemed little less than miraculous, that a soul, hitherto so gloomed and wavering, should suddenly burst into such great splendor, and avow such intrepid faith. In that house, where, heretofore, only the form and name of religion had been known, the hand of God began to be recognized, and his solemn ministries felt, both in the stroke of affliction and in the balm of comfort.

Amid the greater interests that employed her

thoughts, it was evident that she experienced much satisfaction from her father's reconciliation to me. That I should be there in that chamber of affliction, became the relations in which we had all stood toward each other, and was an assurance of restored harmony that gave her great peace.

Her eyes dwelt often, and with a peculiar affection, upon Mr. Arlington's distressed face — as if she realized the change that was working within him, and knew to what purpose God would appropriate her early death.

That evening, many of her friends called, for it had become generally reported that she would not recover. She had them all brought to her chamber, and spoke to them, most cheerfully, of her blessed peace and hope.

Most of these were young people, of about her own age; and a solemnly beautiful sight it was, to see so many youthful figures grouped around her bed, and so many blooming faces bent tearfully before her, while, in a calm, affectionate, and persuasive voice, she addressed to them her parting words. The experience to which her language bore witness, was too profound, perhaps, for their entire appreciation; but her features were lighted up with such a peaceful lustre, and her utterance was so firm, so gentle, and so winning, that they all felt themselves in the presence of one just passing the portal of heaven, and already transfigured by its eternal halo.

As they bent and kissed her, one by one, and moved

silently away — bearing in their memories the image of that dear face, made almost celestial by the triumph of her fire-tried spirit,— how many sacred impressions must have been quickened in their pliant hearts — how many holy impulses confirmed — and what a *persuasion* they must have retained of the REALITY of all that the Gospel reveals and enforces ! In future days, when allusions shall be made to Christian themes — to the love of the Father, as manifested in Christ — to the worth of virtue and trust and submission — and to the hopes and evidences of immortality,— how the remembrance of that scene must help to interpret the meaning of these things, and make familiar what were otherwise strange and distant !

But while the soul of our friend grew thus serener and stronger, hour by hour, its perishable temple was rapidly wasting, and it became evident that the end was near.

About ten o'clock, she passed into a pleasant slumber, in which she lay, for some hours, apparently free from pain, and tranquil as a happy child.

Miss Lark kept constant vigil by the bed-side ; while the members of the family — retiring from the room to vent their grief — looked in, at brief intervals, as the sad night waned.

As regards myself, I went below, and sought the more ample range of the garden. The jewelled sky shone clear as a sapphire sea, and the first airs of spring played with the budding boughs. There was a benign influence in the night, that soothed the tur-

moil of the heart,— something that impressed the soul with a sense of infinite protection and of invisible ministries.

I had been walking here — I know not how long — when Mr. Arlington joined me.

Taking my arm, he said — with an air of profound solemnity —

“ Brother Chester, this can be none other than God’s work, and marvellous, in our eyes, it is. Who can help revering his eternal will, or confessing the wisdom of his appointments? Truly, though clouds and darkness be round about him, justice and mercy administer his law.”

It was gratifying to notice how his mind was tending toward an attitude of trustful resignation; and I responded, with a quotation from the sacred oracle :

“ The Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. And our light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.”

* * * * *

Just as the day began to dawn, a change became visible in our friend, that proclaimed the near approach of death.

By the physician’s direction, the family were assembled at the bed-side.

She was conscious of the approaching crisis, but her heart was not dismayed — it was firm and assured,

to the last. She had a peaceful word for all; and on the strength of her own potent faith, we all leaned and found support. At her request, a hymn was sung, and she blended her voice in the chorus. But when the strain was ended, *she* heard music still — as she said — and listened, with a look of mingled awe and delight. Then came her tender leave-taking — sealed by a kiss from those lips that were soon to be dust.

Brightening still, with the last throb of her heart, her face shone upon us with a saintly lustre; and, at the moment of sunrise, she glided from us without pain or strife.

On the spring-tide of nature and of her own life, she floated away; but the sun that marked her departure, is not worthy to illumine the land where she resides, henceforth. For the Lord God is her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning are ended.

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If my readers will accept another confession, I will admit that I have never married.

It is not that I am bound by any vow to be loyal to that first affection, but, rather, because the memory of it fills my heart, and I find no one who is capable of supplanting it.

My life is now more than half spent, and my wedded friends tell me that I shall find its evening lonely, with no answering soul to reflect its emotions

in mine. Lonely, it may be, as regards human companionship, but not desolate, or dreary; for I KNOW that the ministry of spirits is more than the dream of poesy, and that my life — even if lengthened into old age — will not be destitute of a comforter.

XXXVIII.

WITH ORACULAR BLUNT.

THE turf had grown green over the breast of my beloved friend, before I stood again in the Bubbleton pulpit. I had become worn down, in body and in spirit, by the incessant cares and troubles that attended me through the winter ; and the exertions I had found it necessary to make, during the last few days, brought on an illness, that prostrated me for some weeks.

I was taken sick at the house of Brother Oracular Blunt, and that excellent man would not hear of my leaving the genial shelter of his roof. He was not content with placing all the comforts of his home at my disposal, and furnishing me a nurse in the person of his kind companion ; but actually became my physician, and attended me with a skill that almost equalled his devotion. His collection of medicines was by no means immense, and there was, consequently, the less danger in submitting to his treatment. The names by which they were known, moreover, were singularly intelligible,—though I much fear

that the fact may derogate from the medical reputation of my friend, it being one of the popular conditions of the efficacy of drugs, that they be christened in an unknown tongue.

It was one of Oracular Blunt's eccentricities, to be inveterately opposed to the medical faculty.

It was his boast that he had never lain at the mercy of a doctor, since he "attained to years of discretion," or came to the knowledge of good and evil. Nature abhors such intermeddlers, he said, as much as a great artist would the hap-hazard stroke of a blind man's pencil, and will not act in conjunction with those who mar her perfect work. He affirmed that there is a physical, as well as a moral, idolatry. The true religion of health consists in being loyal to nature; its corruption consists in withdrawing our first allegiance, and "going after strange gods"—which are the doctors! We are suffering, bodily, what the Jews suffered who began to serve Baal and Moloch—we are tantalized, tortured, immolated; and, after all, the gods to whom we defer and sacrifice, render us nothing but evil.

"Last summer," remarked Oracular Blunt, "I was taken ill, in New York, of bilious fever. I was stopping at one of the hotels. It was the hottest part of the season. Of course, it was expected that I would want a physician; but I forbade, at once, the mention of such an idea, and announced that I should take care of myself. I prepared my simple remedies,

and, securing the coöperation of one of the waiters, began to fight the fever.

“For some days, it baffled my science, and no wonder; for the whole city glowed like a furnace, under the mid-summer heat, and the noise of omnibuses and processions and screaming bands of music, made my room nearly as intolerable as Pandemonium. The landlord began to express concern for me, and, finally, a doctor — who chanced to be boarding at the hotel — forced himself into my presence. I told him that I did not require his services, but he clung to me like a leech, as he was. If I was not able to pay him, he said, he would attend me for nothing,— as if to be killed gratis, were any inducement for one to resign his life! At last, I had to order him out of the room; and he went with a longing sort of glance, as if he coveted my frame for the experiments of his abominable trade.

“Well, within two weeks, I recovered and came home; whereas, if I had given myself up to that doctor, and taken all the execrable things he might have administered under the disguise of his bad Latin, I should either have been the victim of slow poison, for the rest of my days, or been made a candidate for dissection, at the end of six weeks.

“Now, Brother Chester,” added Mr. Blunt, “I am going to defend you from destruction, as I defended myself. Having fought, victoriously, the beasts of Bubbleton — as Paul did those of Ephesus — you must not be allowed to perish, here in D——, by the

wise blunders of our good Dr. Quackeryhash. I say nothing against the man, as a citizen, or neighbor, but I should be like that worst of assassins who betrays his own guest, if I permitted him to approach you, in his professional character."

And so Oracular Blunt, himself, became responsible for my treatment — as I had already stated — and I had no reason to lament the exclusion of Dr. Quackeryhash.

During the severest period of my illness, Mr. Arlington came over to see me, daily, and exhibited the kindest solicitude for my situation.

The temper of his life was changed: the sacrifice of his home's treasure was not in vain; the bereavement was hallowed to the renewing of his mind. As prosperity had perverted him, so affliction restored him to the line of duty. His nature — warped and hardened in the sun — recovered its proportions and its freshness under the cloud that shed its night-rain of grief.

One of the results of this important change in Mr. Arlington, was, that his friendship for me became stronger, because better grounded, than ever. It was now intrenched within his esteem, and sanctified by the tenderest associations. He took upon himself the care and expense of procuring supplies for my pulpit, and begged that I would not think of resuming my labors, until my health should be perfectly restored.

Many other members of the parish rode out to

D,——, during my convalescence, and I received some very gratifying tokens of affection from my people.

Harry Hanson was not among those who neglected to visit me. He frequently climbed into Mr. Blunt's perch, towards sunset, and, presenting his ample figure and kind face at my couch, entertained me with all the pleasant news he had been able to gather from Bubbleton — after which he went home in the evening train.

On the occasion of one of these visits, the blacksmith appeared in unusually gay spirits.

"Lord!" he exclaimed, seating himself by my bed, "what a chance you have lost, Mr. Chester! What an enemy you are to your own prosperity! I see, plainly, that you will never serve your own interests, unless you fix your attention upon some great example of worldly prudence!"

"What do you mean?" responded I,—"what chance have I lost? and how do you prove me so deplorably imprudent?"

"Listen," said Harry Hanson. "You will be awfully distressed, though, by what I am going to relate."

"Never mind: I am strong now."

"It may bring on a relapse, and Mr. Blunt will have to call in Quackeryhash, at last."

"Go on, Brother Hanson."

"Well, then, you must know that the Reverend Mr. Downy, pastor of the Plush-street Church, is going to Europe."

"Is that all?"

“Lord! not by any means. I am inflicting the blow by degrees.”

“Well?”

“Mr. Downy’s friends, at the Plush-street Church, have made him up a purse of seven hundred dollars, as a present, and granted him leave to absent himself for six months.”

“They are very generous to their pastor, are they not?”

“Yes, and he is very generous to them; he spares his manliness, and they can well afford to spare their money.”

“You put the case well, Brother Hanson. Have you told me all?”

“No; there is one man in the Plush-street Church, who *proposed* this thing, and who contributes a hundred dollars towards Mr. Downy’s complimentary purse. Who do you suppose that man is?”

“Robert Fiscal — perhaps.”

“The very man! Lord! how well you guess! He is a boundless admirer of the Reverend Hyperion Downy.”

“So one might infer.”

“And he was once as great an admirer of you, and would have proposed doing you the like favor, if you had not forfeited his friendship.”

“Indeed! are you certain of that?”

“It is what he, himself, told me to-day. Now you see what you have lost, by venturing to tell a rich man the truth. Now you see how the lack of a little

prudential forecast, and of a little laxity of principle, hinders one's advancement ! ”

“ Yes, I see ; but do you think I could change my course, and recover what I have lost ? ”

“ Doubtful, I think ; you seem to have a strong predilection for honesty, and 't would take a long time to stretch you over the Plush-street model. But I must tell you one thing more : Mr. Fiscal gives, not only his money, but his company, to Mr. Downy, to facilitate the minister's summer recreations. They are to travel together.”

“ Ah ! that is better still.”

“ Yes, it is a very well-considered arrangement. Mr. Fiscal has had a very arduous time of it, during the winter, helping to reduce so many people to brute-hood and want ; and Mr. Downy has had an arduous time of it, too, trying to convert the living world by preaching against dead Babylon. Poor men ! they both need a chance to recruit their energies, that they may devote themselves again to their highly useful avocations ! ”

XXXIX.

MR. BLUNT DISCOURSES AGAIN.

WHILE the blacksmith was speaking, Brother Oracular Blunt came into the room. He had conceived something of an attachment for my worthy parishioner, between whose sturdy character and his own there was an obvious correspondence, as well as in the bold, picturesque style of their expressions.

Mr. Blunt was not long in informing himself of the subject of our conversation. His countenance at once assumed an air of profound anxiety.

“Mr. Fiscal ought to be advised of the danger he incurs,” said he, seriously.

“The danger?”

“Yes, in sailing in the same ship with Mr. Downy. I would not incur the risk, for any ordinary consideration.”

We did not immediately comprehend Mr. Blunt’s allusion.

“Do you not remember,” pursued the eccentric minister, “how a certain preacher, of old — disobeying the voice of God and thinking to escape from his

duty — brought a tempest upon the ship in which he sailed, and endangered the lives of all the passengers? Now, if the winds of heaven do not toss the vessel that is cumbered with Hyperion Downy, it can only be because the Lord adopts a different method, at the present day, to punish those who refuse to do his will.”

This amusing and characteristic conceit made the good blacksmith quite merry.

“I shall call Robert Fiscal’s attention to that history of Jonah,” he said, “and conjure him not to involve his precious fortunes with those of an unfaithful prophet.”

Mr. Blunt continued :

“It would prove an interesting inquiry, to ascertain what proportion of the European vessels that have been wrecked, contained recreant ministers. Some information might be elicited, on this point, that would be highly beneficial to the insurance-offices, and to the community at large !”

“A capital suggestion !” exclaimed Harry Hanson ; “it ought to be reported in the newspapers.”

“If it should turn out,” pursued Mr. Blunt, “on a careful examination of statistics, that false ministers, like gunpowder, actually appear to endanger a ship, what a curious spectacle would be presented !

“Suppose I should wish to engage passage for New Orleans or Havana. I look at the advertisements, and find that the ship, *Mud Turtle*, sails within a week. I find it specified, moreover — by way of allaying the

apprehensions of the cautious public — that no clergyman, of the order of Jonah, will be admitted into the ship; or, if admitted under a misapprehension of his true character, will be cast overboard on the first indication of foul weather! Or, possibly, it might be required — as a proper precautionary measure — that each clerical passenger should exhibit a certificate — say — from the committee of his society, assuring all whom it might concern, that the bearer thereof had, according to the command of God and the usage of Scripture, faithfully warned the Nineveh of his charge, of whatever calamities its wickedness might be preparing; and that he was, therefore, entitled to good usage and the friendship of the crew!”

I was much amused by the hypothetical dilemma, which Mr. Blunt's versatile fancy had arranged for catching the clergy; nor was the parishioner a whit the less delighted.

A day or two later, Mr. Blunt showed me a notice of the Reverend Hyperion Downy, which had just appeared in a religious newspaper — the local organ of his sect. The notice appertained to his contemplated European tour, and made such extreme allusions to his ministerial integrity, and to his unserved devotion to all the interests of society, that I was inclined, on the first reading, to regard it as a piece of exquisite irony. But it was not designed to rank with that species of composition,—it was intended as a literal, unqualified statement of the character and professional usefulness of the Plush-street minister.

“Happy are the unsophisticated few,” exclaimed Oracular Blunt, “who have not lost their faith in print! It is a melancholy discovery we make, when first we see how awfully types can be made to lie! Now I suppose that nine-tenths of the readers of this paper will accept this notice, implicitly, and so conceive Mr. Downy to be little less than apostolic, with respect both to the rigidity of his principles, and the self-denial of his disposition.”

“And still, I presume this editor did not design a deliberate falsehood,” answered I; “he simply wrote without adequate authority.”

“Or rather, perhaps, he was misled by a false data,” said Mr. Blunt. “He knew that the Plush-street Church was in ‘a flourishing condition’ — as the term is commonly used — and he *inferred* that its pastor must be a very good man. Perhaps he has a large list of subscribers among the Plush-street people, and if so, the fact would naturally lead him to conclude that Mr. Downy’s ministry is attended by that spiritual growth, which he has here ascribed to it.

“It is a common error to estimate the character of a minister by the degree of *immediate success* that marks his labors. A man may be most sincere, most gifted, and most industrious; and yet fail to make the fruit of his exertions manifest, in the day he lavishes them. And another man may be very insincere — weak in his gifts and shallow in his culture,—he may even be a bad man; and yet succeed in marshalling a crowd around him, and showing many of the popular

tokens of prosperity. It is not safe, therefore, to draw inferences concerning a minister's character, from the position he may occupy, or the transient fame he may be capable of winning. It is by no means to be supposed that those men whose names are most frequently in the editorial canon, are most honest, most diligent, or most self-devoted. If good and true men knew of no judgment-seat better than public opinion, thousands might despair of ever having their merit recognized.

"There is Brother Stringent, for instance, of whom you have been telling me — a man who gave himself to the ministry with the most self-denying resolution. What editor has ever commemorated his virtues, or cheered the barrenness of his career by an encouraging allusion? He has fainted in the conflict, it seems, and lain down by the way; and who is there now, who will do him justice, and restore to him his early faith in man? True, he has failed; but that very failure is more glorious — infinitely more glorious — as you and I know — than the brilliant success of such men as Hyperion Downy. And yet the false man is applauded, as a saint, and the true man condemned, as 'a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition'!

"Brother Chester," cried Mr. Blunt, after a moment's rumination, "contrive to keep your name out of the editorials of the newspapers, if you can; for the time is coming when such fulsome paragraphs will only serve to bring suspicion upon a man's character, or abilities. All really discerning people will say,

‘Here is a fellow who can’t stand alone, but must be propped by columns of printers’ lead. His work is not such that it can *report itself*; but every trivial thing he does, must beg at least three lines from some current journal, lest it fall, suddenly, into oblivion.

“No, Brother Chester, a really sound, diligent man, needs no publicity but the natural echo of his own earnest deeds, or the inevitable reflection of his splendid soul. When a giant appears among men, he does not send a troop of boys before him to announce his approach with fire-crackers and tin-trumpets; but the silent force that is in him reverberates along the earth, wheresoever he moves.”

X L.

MISS LARK SOARS INTO A NEW SPHERE.

I RESUMED my pastoral work in Bubbleton, with more confidence in my ultimate success than I had hitherto been able to acquire. Various influences had combined to effect a favorable change in the parish. Mr. Arlington's public concession and renewed friendship — occurring in conjunction with the affliction that ravished his home — carried an immense influence. My own illness — which was ascribed to the unjust anxieties and malignant persecutions by which I had been beleaguered — secured the more cordial sympathy and attachment of a large number of the society. Besides, there was a just Christian SENTIMENT — quickened, perhaps, under Brother Stringent's ministry — growing up in the hearts of the people, and gradually modifying their views.

As I stood up before the congregation, the first Sunday succeeding this interim, and caught the kindly glances that shone upon me — warmer than the sunlight — from hundreds of upturned faces ; a calm, assuring joy passed into my heart, and a home atmo-

sphere enfolded me with a sense of peace and love, unfelt before.

It was about this time that I heard it rumored, that my romantic friend, Miss Lark, had secured a conquest, and was about to become a bride.

The man who had surrendered to the charms of Miss Lark was a young portrait-painter, who had opened his rooms in Bubbleton, about six months before. As soon as I heard that he had become responsible for the happiness of my fair friend, I paid him a visit, and was pleased to find that he appeared possessed of good principles, and with talents that promised, at least, a moderate success in his vocation. I saw that he had great enthusiasm for his art, and great love for the harmonies and sentimentalities of the poets; and I augured for the affianced lovers, a very contented and felicitous union.

At the meeting of the sewing-circle, that week, Miss Lark did not make her appearance until quite a late hour — thus affording her friends an opportunity for unlimited gossip on the subject of her engagement.

Judging from a few observations which I overheard, after my arrival, I fear that my friend's choice was criticized, and her judgment impugned, with considerable severity — particularly by the more mature maiden ladies, who volunteered their expressions on the subject.

“A portrait-painter!” exclaimed one, “that must be a very unsubstantial calling.”

“So he’s already found it, if what I hear is true,” responded another. “They say he was so much in debt, in Hartford, that he had to leave town under cover of night, to escape an attachment!”

There was a general expression of amazement, among the spinsters, at this statement.

“Who would have thought it?” demanded Miss Primrose.

“Before I would marry a man that could n’t pay his debts!” said Miss Starcher, tossing her grand little head, with imperial disdain.

Young Hetty Morris looked up from her work, with her eyes full of mischief, and said:

“We all know how fastidious Miss Starcher is; she’s been marriageable this dozen years, but can’t find a man perfect enough to throw herself away upon. Miss Starcher, it’s almost a forlorn hope, is n’t it?”

Miss Starcher grew very red, but made no intelligible answer; while an embarrassing titter was heard from a group of girls, in another quarter of the room.

“Well, I think she might have done better, anyhow,” said Miss Staytorights, alluding to Miss Lark’s choice; “I’ve no great opinion of these *artesian* gentlemen.”

“I should like to know what they’re to live upon,” said Miss Pod, “for they won’t find portrait-painting very profitable, here in Bubbleton, in my opinion.”

“True,” responded Hetty Morris, in an undertone,

“there’s a great lack of good *subjects*, is n’t there, Miss Pod?”

The lady addressed, cringed under Hetty’s roguish banter, but Miss Pennyweight now condescended to enter the lists.

“They will live on poetry — sentiment — moonshine!” exclaimed that severe dignitary. “They will need nothing better than the sweets of roses and the songs of nightingales, so long as the summer lasts; but when cold weather comes, you’ll find they’ll shrivel into nothing!”

It was the most poetical thought Miss Pennyweight had ever been known to express; but the doleful prophecy concerning Miss Lark and her lover, did not seem to make any very profound impression.

“My own impression is,” said Hetty Morris, “that they will live on love, and I think they’ll find it very good fare, don’t you, Miss Pod?”

But Miss Pod did not profess to know anything about love, and did n’t wish to, she was sure of that.

“Don’t know anything about it, ha?” said Hetty, with amusing compassion; “well, *I* do — that is, I dream about it, you know.”

“Fiddlestick!” exclaimed Miss Pennyweight, “girls of your age are full of such nonsense. Love, indeed! what do you know about it?”

“O not much, as yet, to be sure,” answered Hetty, “but then I expect to. The song says, ‘Every lassie has a laddie,’ and so I expect to find mine, by and by. I only hope he may be as handsome and good as Miss

Lark's; for I don't believe a word about his having left Hartford, in the manner Miss Gimp speaks of."

Miss Gimp bridled, and demanded whether Hetty meant to dispute her word.

"O no," answered Hetty, "I only dispute the report, and I hope you're not accountable for *that*. Here the other day," continued Hetty, "it was reported that a lady — an acquaintance of mine — had got jilted; but I didn't think myself warranted in believing it."

Miss Gimp bent over her work, with face and neck dyed scarlet. Her confusion was so obvious, that nobody inquired the name of the unfortunate lady.

"Hetty Morris," said the president, in her most shrewish voice, "you had better attend a little more strictly to your work, and bridle that impudent tongue of yours."

"Well, I will try," returned Hetty, "but somehow my tongue will say what it pleases, here; I believe it takes pattern after the others!"

Having said this, Hetty remained silent until Miss Lark arrived; and I improved the opportunity by giving my own opinion of the young artist, and by rebuking, in a mild way, the severity with which his name had been treated.

A few weeks later, I had the pleasure of uniting Miss Lark and Mr. Vernon by the matrimonial tie.

They took a short bridal trip — I think, to Saratoga — and then commenced housekeeping in the old home, with the bride's mother.

One day, when I called—it was about three months after the marriage—the young wife met me with an expression of triumphant happiness. Some blessed revelation sparkled in her radiant look.

“I’ve such a delightful bit of news to tell you, Mr. Chester, I’ve been wishing to see you all day.”

She sat down beside me, with a new number of the *Lady’s Book* in her lap.

“Now, please don’t think me foolish, or vain, Mr. Chester, but I’m really very proud and glad at what’s happened.”

With sincere sympathy in her gladness, I begged that she would tell me all about it.

“Well, then,” began my fair friend, “after I had come to know George, and he had told me that he loved me, and we had promised to be married, and all that,—I began to study means of being useful to him, and of helping him to get ahead a little; for you know George isn’t rich, and could offer me only his talents and his love—but they’re better than silver and gold, are they not, Mr. Chester?”

“Well, I considered the subject night and day, and, at last, I thought of a very bold plan. I sent two manuscripts to the *Lady’s Book* for publication. I wrote them by nights, very carefully and secretly, and sent them on without consulting anybody. They were love-stories, and the conversations were such as George and I had held together. Don’t laugh at me, Mr. Chester, but hear me out.

“When the next number of the magazine appeared,

I found that my stories were accepted. In another month one of them was printed, and the editor wrote me, that, with a little more practice, I might hope to be engaged soon, as a regular paid contributor. How my heart bounded at that thought! I wrote another story, longer than the others, and took a world of pains with it. That was about the time we were married; but I did n't mention what I was about — not even to George. Well, time fled very fast, but I had begun to be a little anxious about my story, when I found it, yesterday, printed in this magazine. It is anonymous, as were the others, and nobody in Bubbleton knew the author but me. This morning came another letter from the editor, enclosing twenty dollars, and saying that he would pay me for a story every month. Is n't it a glorious prospect, Mr. Chester? To think that I shall be able to earn such sums of money to help dear George along, and all by writing,—to say nothing of having my poor, dear sketches read by so many thousands of people!"

My good little friend paused — quite out of breath — while I congratulated her with all my heart.

"You have told George now, I suppose," said I.

"Yes, I waited till we were all seated at dinner — George and mother and I — and then I told them all about it. O, you should have seen how astonished and delighted they were — George, especially! He came very near overthrowing the table, he was so delightfully frantic in his joy. And then he read the stories, and praised them, in his great, hearty,

extravagant way, until my eyes were brimfull of tears, and I was so thankful that I could have prayed aloud.

“But the wilful man won’t take a dollar of the money,” added the happy wife; “he says I shall have all I earn, to appropriate as I please, and that he will work his fingers off if I do not have more still. What a dear, glorious fellow he is! and how very, very happy we all are, Mr. Chester!”

The deep joy of her simple heart, gushed over her face in sparkling tears.

“O, how good God must be,” said she, “to make us capable of so much happiness!”

After a moment’s silence, she added, “You must stay and drink tea with us, won’t you? George will be in early, for the dear fellow forgot to eat his dinner; and then we shall all have such a delightful visit.”

So I remained, and a very joyous time it was.

Mrs. Lark Vernon has since become a noted contributor to the popular magazines. Her portrait has graced one of the monthlies, and her name has a place among “the female poets of America.” She continues my faithful friend. In spite of some tears that do not come of gladness, she enjoys a reasonable amount of happiness; and, in spite of sentiment, fulfils her duties acceptably, to all around her.

XLI.

MR. PEPPERY PROVES INCORRIGIBLE.

PERHAPS my readers would like to receive some further information, concerning Mr. Peppery. I will, therefore, appropriate a little space in these closing sheets, to the affairs of the energetic little reformer.

Throughout the summer, at intervals, Mr. Peppery continued to harangue knots of people, in Bubbleton and elsewhere, on his favorite topic, American slavery. Sometimes, he was heard with attention, and, at others, ingloriously hooted — according to the views and temper of those whom he happened to address.

On one occasion, while delivering a terrible philippic against the powers that be, on Boston Common, and while rather an ominous sensation was agitating the crowd that heard him — Mr. Peppery found himself suddenly seized by two members of the police, and led off to prison, like an apostle, charged with “turning the world upside down.” He was soon liberated by the interposition of some of his partisans;

but he never forgave the Puritan city that base act of tyranny.

“Talk of liberty in America, either of speech or person!” cried Mr. Peppery, after he had been delivered from the clutches of the officials,—“there’s no such thing, North or South. It’s a humbug and an insult to talk of our being a free people! We’re all under the thumbs and heels of Southern planters. They’re an amazing able set of rascals — those Southerners; they not only compel three millions of negroes to do their work and serve their vices, but they compel, also, the boasted freemen of the North to bow, like lackeys, to their ungodly wills, and forswear all the principles and privileges of manly independence. They buy our politicians’ *souls* as they do the bodies of their slaves,—they frighten our merchants by threatening to withdraw their trade; and they so cajole and brow-beat all classes of the people, that a man can no more speak against their abominable institution, with safety to himself, here in Boston, than in New Orleans.

“But, as the Lord lives, and I am not changed into a sheep,” concluded Mr. Peppery, “no Southern aristocrat shall put a ring in my nose, and no Northern sycophant shall stop my mouth. I will lift up my voice like a trumpet,—I will cry aloud and spare not; and better voices than mine shall swell the alarm, till the Capitol trembles, and the nation awakes to a sense of its peril!”

Just after the meeting of Congress, Mr. Peppery

was moved to visit Washington. No consideration could dissuade him from this purpose. He particularly desired an interview with General Jackson, though what he expected to accomplish by it, was known only to himself. Somebody furnished him with the necessary funds, when — leaving his family to the care of Providence — the earnest little reformer set out on his mission.

We all anticipated trouble for Mr. Peppery, and hence were not surprised, when tidings reached us that he was imprisoned in Baltimore. Efforts were made to secure his liberation; and, after three months' confinement, he was set at liberty, and made the auditor of some well-meant advice regarding his future behavior.

He went on to the capital city, where it became his habit to waylay senators, and teach them their duty. One day, he publicly denounced one of those gentlemen from the gallery — to the great amazement of the dignified legislators — and only escaped punishment through a prevalent belief in his insanity. But he had not sufficient diplomatic art to gain his coveted interview with the President. Smoother and subtler men were always ahead of him, and the free-spoken reformer was foiled at every turn.

At length, in the ensuing spring — after a succession of unhappy adventures — Mr. Peppery reappeared in Bubbleton. He was ragged, emaciated, and sick; but the spirit of the man defied all his hardships and indignities.

He secured the Town Hall for a certain evening, and gave notice that he proposed describing his late tour, for the entertainment of his fellow-citizens.

This announcement brought out an immense audience, who gave the speaker the most respectful attention, for two hours; and the indefatigable radical made the most of the occasion, for the benefit of his cause. He described slavery, as it had been displayed under his own eyes,—becoming especially indignant at the remembrance of the slave-pens that pollute the national capital. He dwelt long, and with many a searing sarcasm, upon the subserviency and double-dealing he had detected in the politicians. He alluded to his private adventures only so far as they tended to expose the arrogance and tyranny of the slave power, and so confirm and enforce his general statements.

His address was quite effective, and was the means of opening the eyes of many indifferent persons, to a right view of the enormities of slavery, and the accountability of the whole country for its wrongs.

Harry Hanson was loud and earnest in its commendation.

“Lord!” exclaimed the good blacksmith, “I don’t begrudge what I’ve given to Peppery’s family”—(he had, in fact, supported them, through the winter)—“since the snarling, invincible little man serves the public so ably. A true hero, is our brave Peppery—prophet, apostle and martyr, all blended in his compact personality. Fortune, like a mad bull, may

toss him on its horns, ever so high, or ever so frequently; — down he comes sound and valiant as before, and ready to battle again in the unequal strife!

“If Garrison ever gets this troublesome Union split asunder,” added Harry, “Peppery shall preach up a crusade against the infidels of the South, after the manner of Peter the Hermit, and we will all march with him and subjugate the land!”

After the gathering at the Town Hall, Mr. Peppery became quite a lion in Bubbleton. He created a very considerable anti-slavery sensation in our patriotic community.

But popularity was a burden which the little reformer could ill support. He soon contrived to divest himself of so unnatural an appendage. He broached doctrines so extremely revolutionary, as to renew all the opposition in which he had gloried.

Thus Mr. Peppery's warfare was continued in perennial vigor. He never put off his armor until he laid aside his mortality.

XLII.

BROTHER STRINGENT SEES BETTER DAYS.

As I became more and more assured of the friendly esteem and returning harmony of my parish, my thoughts recurred, with more frequency, to Brother Stringent,—to the trials that overpowered him—to his withdrawal from the ministry, and to the unhappy perversion of his noble nature. I considered the probability of his being restored to his office, and to his early trust. The more I reflected on the subject, the more desirous and confident I became of having the work effected.

I did not hesitate long before I consulted Brother Oracular Blunt.

“I have been thinking of the same thing, myself,” said the good minister of D——, “and am ready to exert my influence in Brother Stringent’s behalf. I saw a good deal of the man, while he was fighting the good fight in Bubbleton, and I know that he had, at that time, many of the best qualities I ever found in a clergyman. It would be a great loss, were such a man to perish, utterly, before the stupid anger of the idolaters.

“The first thing to be done,” continued Mr. Blunt, with his usual directness, “is to find a society adapted to Brother Stringent’s peculiar wants: for I foresee that we must humor the man’s fancy, somewhat—in the present state of his feelings—or we shall never get him started again on the course, with any proper degree of resolution. There is a parish in Freemansport, which is destitute of a pastor; and the more I think of it, the more I am convinced that there is the place for Brother Stringent. I have seen some specimens of the parish, and they do not appear to be contaminated by the surrounding heathenism, as most of our societies do. However, to make all sure, and also to expedite this affair, suppose we ride over there, at our first convenience, and make a personal inspection of their soundness.”

And, accordingly, we went.

We stated to the committee the chief points in Brother Stringent’s history and character, with frankness and impartiality, and declared our estimate of his worth and usefulness, provided he could labor with the confidence and affection of a people. They were interested in our report, and expressed an earnest desire to see and hear him.

We next proceeded to Brother Stringent’s home, and conferred with him. He was much moved by the interest we had shown in his affairs, but did not come readily into our views. He shrunk from making another trial of his ministerial capacity. The recollection of his failures was too vivid and forbidding.

Moreover, he had become interested in his newspaper enterprise, which was now beginning to afford him a better support than he had ever realized from preaching.

But there was nothing mercenary in Brother Stringent's character. He only needed to be convinced of the probability of his success in the ministerial field, to induce him to sacrifice the best pecuniary prospects. The account we gave of the Freemansport people was evidently pleasing; and when Mr. Blunt informed him what a revolution was being wrought in Bubbleton, he seemed to recover — by a violent spasm of astonishment — much of his lost confidence in the latent goodness of mankind.

To be brief, we persuaded him to visit Freemansport.

The dormant spirit of the man revived, — some of the old, spring-day sunshine beamed through his nature, — and the people were thrilled by his preaching, and delighted by his manners. They gave him a cordial invitation to settle with them, and he — with all the cynical mistrust that lingered with him still — could not resist the flattering prospect. He disposed of his paper, after a few months, and removed to Freemansport.

Oracular Blunt insisted that he should be installed, for that act, he said, would impress both parties with a better sense of the permanency of their relation; and besides, he added, it might afford him an opportunity to dogmatize a little to pastor and parish, about

their relative duties. There was, accordingly, an installation service, and Mr. Blunt's address to the society, on that occasion, was a masterpiece of pertinent wisdom and cogent appeal.

I am sensible how much that address must suffer, in the attempt to transfer it to these pages — after so great a lapse of time —; and yet I cannot withstand the impulse to fix, in these closing records, some few of the best-remembered sentences :

“Don't expect too much of your minister,” advised Mr. Blunt. “Under the excitement of his first discourses, and while the audience is yet strange, he may preach with more spirit than he will subsequently average. There will be more novelty in his manner and thought, during the first few months, than you will find, later. For a minister must carry his own individuality into the pulpit, even after it has become familiar ; he cannot exchange himself for a prodigy, even though fastidious hearers sometimes find him tame.

“You must not expect to be electrified every Sunday, by successive discoveries of wonderful truths. Such treasures lie deep, and if a man brings one of them to light in a lifetime, the deed is talked of, the world over, and he gets a marble statue for his pains. Don't go to church, then, with any such fallacious hope. Don't go, either, to have your fancy amused by intellectual gymnastics ; let your preacher stand on his feet, and talk to you like a rational Christian, in the fear of God ! Go to church — not so much to hear *new* truth — but to have old truth *vitalized*,

and applied to your hearts, according to your condition.

“I say, again, don’t expect too much of your minister : Remember, he is human — made out of the same elements as yourselves. Like you, he is liable to his caprices — to the effects of circumstances — to error and to evil. He will want three meals a day, and may get the influenza, as well as the weakest of you ; and, in both cases, you must be prepared for the consequences.

“Again, brethren, don’t expect *too little* of your minister : don’t hope to find him an automaton, whom every conceited meddler among you can manage at his will. You will find that Brother Stringent did not put off his manhood, when he assumed the ministry. He has a will — methods — motives — of his own ; and will act by them, with becoming deference to your pleasure, as God shall give him wisdom and understanding. If he were less independent than I know him to be, I would have nothing to do with installing him as your teacher ; for never would I place the hand of consecration upon that wooden-headed poltroon, who gives a treacherous lip-service to his God, and sells his soul to the congregation for a pitiful salary.

“Again,” continued Mr. Blunt, “I trust you will prove to your minister, that you *reciprocate* the affectionate interest which he is expected to feel towards you. Don’t suffer him to suspect that you are indifferent to his happiness,—that your concern

in him is merely mercenary,—that he dwells among you only by the toleration of charity or custom. Such a thought would go far toward quenching his zeal, burned it never so bright and pure. Show him all the kindness you can; it will be as the sunshine that vitalizes and beautifies the earth; and your generous deeds will return to you in blessing, in the ampler fruitage you will have enabled his soul to bear.

“Unite yourselves to him, brethren, both in brotherly sympathy with his cares, and in manly coöperation with his efforts. Don’t expect him to do his own work and yours besides. Let each bear the burden proper to him. It is his to suggest, recommend, and illustrate divine virtues, for your pursuit and attainment. This is all he can do. He cannot break for you the thrall of worldliness, or enter your hearts and vanquish the habits and predispositions of years. This is your work, and you alone must perform it. . . . God grant unto him all needed wisdom to show the heavenly way, and unto you the humble and patient spirit that wanders not astray.”

I take pleasure in adding, that Brother Stringent’s settlement in Freemansport proved, every way, fortunate and durable. The parish profited by Mr. Blunt’s plain hints, and never regretted the choice they made of a minister. Brother Stringent has risen very high in the esteem of his brethren, and can now “make a practical application of the Gospel,” without censure—even in Bubbleton.

Mr. Arlington listens to him with none of his former apprehensions, and could even endure a repetition of that famous Fourth-of-July Sermon, I presume, without trembling for the stability of the government, or chafing for the injured credit of the nation.

XLIII.

THE PLUSH-STREET MINISTER RECEIVES A CALL.

HYPERION DOWNY did not make his contemplated European tour. A circumstance occurred, on the eve of his departure, which effectually thwarted his plans, and gave, it is to be hoped, a higher tone to his life.

Having consummated his arrangements for spending the summer abroad, and feeling that some acknowledgment was due his numerous friends in Bubbleton, for their many acts of kindness and liberality, — Mr. Downy, upon a certain evening, opened his heart and his house to his congregation, and gave a splendid entertainment. Of course, the wealth and fashion and beauty of the city “graced” his rooms — to speak in the tone of journalism — and the “reverend gentleman” and “his accomplished lady” demeaned themselves to the admiration of all spectators.

In such a select and genteel company, gathered under the roof of the popular minister, it is to be assumed that everybody was enchanted. No discordant feelings could penetrate so brilliant a circle, to occa-

sion a moment's chagrin or discontent. Nobody felt irritated by coming in contact with an unfriendly person, or amazed by somebody's impertinence, or scandalized by somebody's vulgarity. The rich merchant felt no insidious care gnawing beneath his satin vest, — the dame with a marriageable daughter, had no restless anxiety about the impression she desired to have her make, — the waning coquette, who had spent the first blushes of her loveliness in vain, saw herself supplanted without bitterness or regret, — the young maidens felt no rankling pride, and the young men no stinging jealousies, — no gossips were there to indulge their vicious observations, and envy did not sneer at those who presided at the piano :

For everybody knows that the Plush-street gatherings are most decorous, most amiable, most care-free, and most happy !

In the very height and affluence of the evening's felicities, there arises a sudden disturbance at the street-door. A loud, strange voice is audible, debating with the usher. A servant enters and whispers in the minister's ear ; and Mr. Downy — gliding through his crowded rooms, with graceful movement and smiling aspect — passes from sight.

As he leaves the company, two enthusiastic old gentlemen begin to vie with each other in sounding his praises.

They agree that he is the most popular, and, therefore, most *profitable*, minister, ever settled over the Plush-street Church ; and are oppressed by the dubi-

ous query as to what would become of the parish, in the event of his going away.—

There is a rumor that his services are wanted by a society in Boston, and some assert that he has even received a call, backed up by immense pecuniary assurances.

This report affects all the Plush-street people with gravity. Some propose raising Mr. Downy's salary, forthwith, and others denounce the supposed overture of the Boston society as ungenerous — to themselves.

"We can't expect to keep him always," remarks one; "such splendid abilities will command for him a higher position, and a larger field, than we can offer him in Bubbleton."

"On the contrary, I think we can, and ought, to keep him, always," responds another; "our society is becoming rich, and may soon pay a Boston salary, if it pleases; and Bubbleton is a very flourishing town, and a man need n't desire a better field than it offers, as I view it."

And the people discuss, from different standpoints, the chances of Mr. Downy's having received, or being disposed to accept, a pastoral call.

When the minister reaches the door, he beholds, standing upon his threshold, an emaciated, ragged, and travel-stained figure.

Mr. Downy gives the beggar — for such he judges the stranger to be — a glance of impatience and disgust, and drops a piece of silver into his hand.

"O, God! that from *you*?" cries the stranger, casting down the coin, and turning from the door.

There is something in the voice that goes to the minister's heart, reviving there a memory almost perished.

He looks at the man more attentively, and then presses his hand upon his breast, as if to stifle a sudden pang.

"Don't you remember me, Hyperion Downy?" exclaims the wretch,—"why, we were boys together;—we read from the same book, in the old chestnut-grove by the river! We formed the same plans, and dreamed the same dreams of our coming manhood; and were all in all to each other once!"

The minister leans against the wall for support, but is speechless. Astonishment, at sight of this sad memorial of his youth, and a full tide of opposing impulses, paralyzes his frame and his utterance.

"Hyperion Downy," cries the man, "I understand you; I am scorned. It is only what I expect from others, for I have fallen into temptation, and have led an evil life; but, O, I thought that from *you*—the friend of my innocent and promising boyhood—the minister of Him who had compassion on the guilty—I might receive some little favor;—if only for the sake of that blessed past, which you must recall, when life was an untried thing, and we were all the world to each other."

A look of anguish passes over the minister's face.

"What can I do for you?" he demands, hoarsely, surveying the vagabond from head to foot.

"What can you do?" the outcast repeats, in a voice full of reproach and despair, "nothing — since your own heart cannot inform you! Farewell!"

"Stop!" the minister commands, "take this, in memory of what we once were to each other; and, if you want more, come to me again."

And he offers two pieces of gold.

The vagabond — rejecting the gift — draws himself up to his full stature.

"Never!" exclaims he, with impetuous anger, "I take no alms from you. I did not come for that, but for what money cannot buy: the forgiving love and wise counsel I hoped to find in my early friend. Hyperion Downy, twenty years ago, we parted equals. The world has prospered you, it seems; me, it has ruined. Your life has been unfolded and cherished by peaceful labors and gentle cares; mine has been betrayed and wasted — I need not say how. Yet God alone must judge between us. Guilty as I am, this shall be reckoned in my favor — that through the blighting sins of twenty years, I kept my early love for you inviolate, even to this hour. And holy as you may be, this shall be reckoned to your condemnation — that you have suffered prosperous days to efface the image of your friend, and to dry up the sympathies that welled from your fresh soul."

Saying which, the vagabond hurries away.

The minister moves—as if he would follow and recall him. But he is far away, already—buried in the obscuring night.

Mr. Downy turns, with agitated look and feeble step—not to rejoin his guests—but to seek the refuge of solitude. He sends word that he shall be with them again in half an hour, and passes straight to his study,—closes the door, and turns the key.

There, sinking into his luxurious chair, and covering his face with his hands, he sees the vision of his YOUTH, like a phantom, rising out of the past, and overshadowing him so mournfully! Keener grows the pang at his heart, as we see by the frequent pressing of his hand upon his breast; and whiter grows the hue of his face, where the candle-light winks, and throws its flickering rays.

* * * * *

The protracted absence of the minister begins to occasion surprise, for more than an hour has elapsed, since his smiling presence glided from the apartment. Whispered conjectures begin to be made, concerning the probable cause of his detention. Some think that the “call” has arrived, and that he may be conferring with the Boston committee. Others whisper their belief, humorously, that he is employed in tying some very intricate marriage-knot.

Meantime, the wife—growing anxious over the circumstance—proceeds to the study. She knocks, but there is no response,—tries the door, but it yields

not. No sound — not even a breath — disturbs the awful stillness !

Her wild alarm spreads through the house, bearing terror to every heart. The guests are in commotion. The boldest man advances, and forces the study-door. The minister is seen, sitting in his luxurious chair, with his hand upon his heart, and his head drooped low upon his breast. Neither sound nor motion is there. Mr. Downy has received his call.

XLIV.

PLUSH-STREET AND MR. FISCAL.

No man was more shocked and overcome by Mr. Downy's sudden death, than Robert Fiscal. To the guilty conscience of that mercenary and vindictive man, the event took the aspect of a divine judgment. He brooded over it in secret terror. It quickened in his breast, apprehensions unfelt before. The possibility of a like interruption of his own selfish career, overshadowed him with perpetual alarm.

Nothing tends more powerfully to arrest a man in a bad course, than the sudden appearance of death, barring one of the passages of his design,—the sudden prostration of one who had stood associated with his plans, and who, but an hour before, had appeared in all the vigor of his prime, and flushed with high and ample health. The startled conscience sees, in such an event, the interposition of a power which worldliness and folly cannot confront in peace; and the mind derives a new conviction of the awfulness of its relations to that power, and of the strict accountability to which it will be held. So the mysterious death of

Mr. Downy — in reference to which an infinitude of gossip pervaded Bubbleton — revived Mr. Fiscal's dormant convictions concerning religious verities, and shook his culpable selfishness to its base. He renounced all design of spending the season abroad, and remained, as much secluded as possible, in the quiet of his home.

On Mr. Downy's desk, and close to the dead man's side, was found an incomplete piece of writing, scrawled with a tremulous hand, and which appeared to bear some relation to a disposal of the seven hundred dollars, that were to have paid for the minister's summer recreation. The document was, however, too imperfect to convey any intelligible idea of the intentions of the deceased, and only served to deepen the mystery that settled over the grave of the Plush-street pastor.

Some days subsequently, Harry Hanson visited me with the information, that he had just conveyed to his house an unknown man, whom he had found in a destitute and perishing condition, and who was now apparently dying.

"I found him, early this morning," said the blacksmith, "right in front of the very rum-den where poor Gorman was stabbed. The villains had robbed him of his money, and drugged him with their poisons, and then kicked him into the street to die. Lord! that's the curious kind of gratitude these gentry exhibit toward their customers!"

I went with Harry Hanson to see the vagabond.

He was in a partial delirium, and evidently near

the end of his course. Scarcely enough could be gleaned from his chaotic ejaculations, to determine his name — much less his history.

But what occasioned us much surprise, was, that he made frequent references to Mr. Downy, and seemed to have had an interview with him, on the very evening of his solemn summons. It was evident that the two men had once been intimate, however widely their paths had diverged in later years.

The outcast expired before night, and was buried, unwept and unmourned. But we kept the secret of his acquaintance with Mr. Downy, in consideration of the gossip which its disclosure must have elicited, and laid the mantle of charity over the popular minister's memory.

After the departure of its favorite pastor, the Plush-street church saw evil days. Many candidates were heard, during a lapse of anxious months, but the congregation refused to unite in the election of any one of them. There were many conflicting tastes to gratify, and caprice sat in every heart, blowing the counsels of reason to the winds. Obstinate and ugly parties sprung into being, and the gloss of unity was grievously tarnished. Angry dissensions and fierce debates — such as might almost have called the placid dead from his grave — marred the beautiful proportions of the Plush-street holiness.

At length, a bare majority-vote was wrung from the congregation, in favor of a certain candidate, and he was settled. Whereupon, the minority indignantly

rebelled — abandoned the church, and formed themselves into a separate society. Then, securing to themselves “a minister of the right stamp,” and opening one of the public halls for their services, they began to disseminate the Gospel according to Anti-christ, by a persevering tirade against their late brethren.

The old society welcomed the attack with ardor, and returned it with unction; and so entirely occupied did both parties become with this evangelical contest, that Babylon had a long respite from warfare.

Mr. Fiscal took no part in these dissensions. He sunk into an obscure and inactive member, and remained with the old congregation, a silent spectator of its troubles.

Startled as he was in his feelings, he did not immediately give up his destructive traffic. He loved the gain it secured to him, and his pride dissuaded him from yielding an interest, to which he had sacrificed so much friendly feeling and manly honor. But for this obdurate pride — but for confessing that he had been in the wrong, and now desired to make atonement — it was generally thought that he would have renewed at once his connection with my parish.

Two circumstances occurred, however, during the ensuing winter, that effected a yet more favorable change in Robert Fiscal.

The first, was the advent of a Washingtonian reformer, who set Bubbleton in a blaze of excitement, by his powerful addresses and thrilling appeals. The

work which had been commenced the preceding winter, amid much embarrassment and opposition, was now precipitated with amazing rapidity. Public opinion rose up in strong array against the dram-dealers, and many were glad to retain the friendship of respectable citizens, by the sacrifice of their disreputable business; while many of the most profitable patrons of the liquor-shops, were roused from their vicious apathy, and withdrawn from the theatre of ruin.

Mr. Fiscal was, of course, much affected by these things. But the other circumstance to which I have alluded, wrought upon him yet more effectively.

His own son fell into temptation, and was exposed to the gaze of the town, reeling and gibbering under the spell of the wine-cup. One cold midnight, he was lifted from the sidewalk, where he had fallen, in the stupor of intoxication, and borne homeward with only a faint throb of life in his breast.

The dram-dealer waited for no more warnings. His casks and decanters retired from the store, and were succeeded by more innocent merchandise. The snug little private room, where the Cyrus Thistleblow fraternity were wont to regale themselves, and discuss the pleasures and prerogatives of "gentlemen," became, in process of time, a receptacle for fresh meat, and a favorite mart where epicures bargained for their dinners.

I continued to meet Mr. Fiscal, at intervals, during half a dozen years, without any attempt being made

to renew our short-lived friendship. For, though all apparent cause of difference between us was now removed, the *memory* of the collision, and of all that it involved, yet interposed a barrier to anything like intimacy. Though he had now tacitly admitted the propriety of my interference with his business, he never entirely forgot the first feelings it awakened against me; and he lacked the magnanimity that bravely confesses an error, and seeks the terms of reconciliation.

And, therefore, Mr. Fiscal worshipped still at the Plush-street Church; a passive observer of its lamentable decline; but no longer the resolute man he was, in the palmy days of Hyperion Downy, when Bubbleton recognized no sin but such as concerned the Babylonians.





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